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Dick Lightheart at Sea.

CHAPTER I.

"AFLAFT ON THE OCEAN WAVE."
I'm afloat, I'm afloat, and the ro-o-over is
free! I'm a—"

The form of Dick Lightheart was perceived amidships, and it was he who had been singing with his accustomed gaiety.

"Beg your pardon," said Dick; "did you address your remarks to me?"

"I did."

"Who are you, may I ask?"

"Have you?"

"Oh, dear, yes. It was yesterday afternoon when I started for a cruise. You ran me and my friends down, and you very properly picked us up. I have recovered from the effects of my ducking, and have come on deck to look about me," said Dick.



The Cruise of the Enigma.

"Stop that noise, or I'll make you!" shouted a second voice, which was raised louder than the first.

"I'm a—" began the first voice again.

"I'll tell you what you are when I get hold of you," interrupted the second voice, which was that of the first mate of the *Indiana*. Mr. Prentice

"My name's Prentice, and I'm first mate of this ship."

"Sorry for the ship, then," said Dick, coolly. "What on earth did they make you first mate for?"

"I'll teach you a thing or two before I've done with you!" shouted the mate angrily.

"I'd rather not. I've left school."

"You'll have to work, my lad, and I don't allow singing," said the mate.

"Don't you? That's a pity. I can't help it."

"You'll have to."

"Can't. It runs in the family. I'm a—"

"Stop it!" said the first mate, you'd better. I'm boss on board this ship when the captain's below."

"So you don't allow singing," said Dick, reflectively."

"No."

"Perhaps you're not musical?"

"What's that to you?"

"Just try the first bar of 'I'm afloat.' It goes like this; Tum-te-rum, tum-te-rum, tum-te-ray!"

The mate was speechless with rage.

"Go ahead, old cock; don't be afraid of it," said Dick. "It won't hurt you."

The mate made various ludicrous contortions of the face in the vain attempt to speak.

"Got a stomach-ache?" asked Dick, feelingly.

The only reply was a shake of the fist.

"Ah, that's bad," said Dick. "I can feel for you. Perhaps you have been eating measly pork. Take a pill or two when you go to bed by-and-bye."

"I'm all right in my inside," said the mate, at last, with an effort; "it isn't that."

"Glad to hear it. Now let's see what you know about singing, I'll lead, you follow me. I'm a—"

Mr. Prentice rushed upon Dick, and seizing him by the arm, said, "You drop it. I won't have any more of your cheek, youngster."

"All right, let go," said Dick; "if singing isn't allowed, why don't you chalk it up, as they do smoking on board the penny boats from London Bridge, and put it like this, 'No singing abaft the funnel!'"

"Look here, my lad," said the mate. "No doubt you think you're very clever, but it won't wash."

"Won't it?" said Dick, looking at the mate's necktie; "you shouldn't have bought it then. It isn't a fast color."

"I'm not talking about that. It's not neckties. It's your performing; drop it, or else you and me will be bad friends."

"Can't help that," said Dick. "I consider myself a passenger on board this ship."

The first mate forgot his anger, and began to laugh.

"What," he said, "you a passenger?"

"Yes. I'm the son of a gentleman, and my father can pay for me."

The mate laughed louder than ever.

"That's a good try on," he answered; "you're an old soldier, but you don't perform on me. You and your friends will have to work, and precious hard, too; we're short-handed with apprentices, and these decks want swabbing."

"Very well, swab 'em," said Dick.

The mate stared at him in amazement.

"I shall have to make you acquainted with a rope's end, my lad," he said.

"Who's he?" asked Dick.

"You're not such a fool as you look; take my advice, and don't try it on with me, that's all," shouted the mate, walking away in high dudgeon.

"I'm afloat, I'm afloat," sang Dick, "and the mate is a bully-ee; I'm afloat; I'm afloat; and I don't care a rap for he."

It will be remembered that Dick Lightheart, Messiter, and the boy Ted, who was deeply attached to Dick, had gone out for a cruise in a sailing boat from Brighton.

They had met with bad weather, been run down by an outward bound, and fortunately rescued by the ship that caused their disaster.

The captain, whose name was Simpson, had undertaken to convey them to his destination, which was the Cape of Good Hope, but he could not land them anywhere, as it was out of his power to make for any nearer port.

A night's rest restored Dick to his accustomed good temper, and high spirits.

He and Messiter had been out sailing so much that they were never sea-sick.

As for Ted, he was a young sea lion, bred and born, as it were, on the stormy ocean.

Dick's encounter with the mate, which we have just described, took place during his

first appearance on deck, on the morning after his accident and rescue.

He strolled along with his hands in his pockets, until he came to the cook's galley.

The cook was a young fellow, named Tom Wildey, who had run away to sea a year before.

"You're nice and warm in here," exclaimed Dick, inhaling an agreeable smell of ham and eggs, which were being prepared for the captain's breakfast.

"Nothing much to complain of," answered the cook, liking Dick's looks. "You keep your sea-legs well. Been afloat afore?"

"A little," replied Dick.

"It was a mercy you wasn't drowned yesterday," said the cook,

"Perhaps I'd better have been, than be on board with a first mate like yours," rejoined Dick.

"Ah! he's a caution, but he isn't a patch on the captain, who's a fiend when he's got you all to himself."

"Is he?"

"You haven't shipped to London before, or you would have heard of Captain Simpson. He's pretty well known, I can tell you, and the owners have some difficulty in manning the ship."

"Why do they keep him?" asked Dick.

"Because he's clever. He may be out in all weather, but he's never lost a ship."

"This seems an old tub," observed Dick, looking round him.

"Yes, she isn't up to much. She pitches and tosses in a gale, awful. It's the oldest ship the firm's got. It's a long time since she's been A 1. But since the Merican war, the English have done all the carrying, and any old ship's good enough for merchandise."

"Is it insured?" asked Dick.

"Yes. I know the insurance was very heavy, and it wouldn't be a bad job for the owners if she went down," replied the cook.

"Bad job for us, though," remarked Dick. "I don't want to be drowned."

"Have you had any breakfast?" asked Tom Wildey, good-naturedly.

"Not a bit."

"I don't expect the apprentices will give you a chance of getting much. There's Sam Jolly and Jerry Coward. Jolly's a bully, and Coward's a sneak."

"I haven't seen them yet," remarked Dick. "Fight shy of both of them. They're no good. They'll make you and your pals do all the work, now you've come on board."

"I'll bet a sovereign they won't get a stroke of work out of me," exclaimed Dick.

"You will?"

"Yes, and post the money."

"Well, you're a plucky un," exclaimed the cook, admiringly, "and from your size and looks, I should think you could slog."

"Just a little bit," answered Dick, smilingly.

"The captain favors Jerry Coward, and listens to all he says. He's a regular sneak," said the cook. "You look out for him."

"I will," said Dick.

"Will you have a bit of breakfast along with me?" said the cook. "I can give you a nice bit I've cut off the skipper's ham, and it's hard if I can't sneak a couple of eggs."

"I'm with you," said Dick, readily, "and I'll return your kindness on the first opportunity."

"Cut in, then; we'll have ours first. Here's a prime bit, cut off a real Yorkshire ham—take this egg, it's yolk."

"Thanks—I like yolks; frizzle up the white a bit."

In a moment Dick was supplied with a good breakfast, which was washed down with a cup of coffee.

The sea was rather high, as there was a heavy swell in the Channel, although the wind had gone down.

It was not difficult to perceive, when Dick came to examine her, that the *Indiana* was a very old ship, and had seen her best days.

It did not matter much to him, however; he had meant to go to sea, and the accident which took him to the Cape of Good Hope was just what he would have wished for.

At the same time he did not mean to be the captain's slave.

Or the first mate's, either.

He had not shipped with them, and they couldn't legally make him work, though he did not mind lending a hand if he was asked in a friendly manner.

His father would pay for his passage if he was asked.

But there was some difficulty in making the officers believe in the truth of his story.

They evidently took him, Messiter and Ted to be three sons of fishermen, and had made up their minds to treat them accordingly.

When he left the galley, Dick went into the cabin where the apprentices slept and messed, and where he and his companions had slept.

There was a great outcry as he came in.

Messiter was exclaiming:

"Leave off, I say—I won't have it. Two of you on to me at once isn't fair."

In a moment Dick was there.

He found the two apprentices, Sam Jolly and Jerry Coward, standing over Messiter with two ropes' ends with which they were hitting him.

"What are you licking him for?" asked Dick, his eyes flashing.

"Because he won't get the breakfast," said Jolly.

"He's not your servant," said Dick; "why should he?"

"He'll have to do it, or you will," said Sam Jolly, the bully, setting his arms akimbo, and staring impudently at Dick.

"My good fellow," said the latter, "don't you make any error. Neither my friend nor myself mean to do anything on board this ship unless we're asked civilly."

Jerry Coward laughed.

Dick immediately gave him a box on the ears, which sent him rolling over a bunk.

"You'll know what you're laughing at next time, my hearty," said Dick.

The boy Ted grinned with intense delight.

"I'll go and tell the captain," said Jerry.

"We can't have the ship upset like this."

"I shan't call you Jerry Coward," I shall call you Jerry Sneak," said Dick. If I catch you sneaking about me, watch it, that's all,"

Sam Jolly, who was a thick-set, heavy-looking fellow, turned to Dick and said:

"I have had enough of this nonsense. Do you mean to do your work or not?"

"Certainly not," said Dick. "Do it yourself."

"Do you want a tarnation good hiding?"

"You can't give it me."

"I can try," can't I?" said Jolly.

"So can any other fool, but it doesn't follow he will do it."

"Look here," said Sam Jolly, "I've been two voyages before this. You're a green hand compared to me, and I'm cock of this loft. We are short-handed. Do the work, and I'll make things easy for you; if not—

"Well?" ejaculated Dick.

"If not, it will be the worse for you."

"I'll chance that," said Dick.

"Do you mean a dust-up with fists?"

"Oh, yes, I'm game for a rough and tumble. It's sure to come sooner or later, and we may as well get it over at once."

"Mind your eye, then; I'm on," said Sam Jolly.

"Ted," said Dick.

"Yes, sir," said the boy.

"Just stand near the hatch, and don't let that Jerry Sneak get out. I don't want this mill stopped."

"Right, sir."

"Messiter," said Dick, again.

"Well," said Harry.

"Get a sponge and a basin of water ready for this cock of the loft will you? He may want it presently."

Messiter grinned.

"More likely you'll want it yourself," growled Sam Jolly, who was getting very savage.

His ugly face glowed with passion, and his great, stupid-looking ears seemed to stick out like cabbage-leaves.

"Come on," he said.

"I'm ready," said Dick.

The fight commenced in the little cabin, and it was evident that the combatants were in earnest.

They knew it was a battle for the mastery of their man, and that the one who won would keep the other in subjection as long as the voyage lasted.

CHAPTER II.

BILL BUNG DOESN'T LIKE IT.

DICK found his opponent as strong as a young pony, but he had not very much skill.

Parrying his blows, and hitting hard when he had a good chance, Dick punished him severely.

But he was knocked down first.

"Will do that for you," said Jolly, "or do you want any more? I learnt something when I was on board the *Chichester*. It isn't a bad training ship, anyhow."

"Oh!" exclaimed Dick, getting up, "I suppose they picked you out of the gutter. That's generally how you get into training ships like the *Chichester*, isn't it? How's your father?"

Sam Jolly foamed with rage.

"Perhaps you never knew him. Poor fellow. It's bad not to know your father, isn't it?—and to get picked up out of the streets, and sent on board the *Chichester*?"

"Come on!" exclaimed Jolly in a husky voice.

This time Dick Lightheart was more careful.

His arms were longer than Jolly's, and he kept him at a distance.

Every now and then he hit him hard, and darted back again.

The fight continued for ten minutes, with varying success.

At last Dick saw a good chance, and pretending to strike Jolly's face, he dropped his hand, and hit him in the stomach.

Jolly doubled himself up with a groan.

In an instant Dick kicked up his knee, and struck him under the chin, making his teeth rattle, causing him to bite his tongue badly, and half stunning him.

As Jolly fell back, gasping for breath, and spitting out blood, Dick exclaimed:

"That's how we do it, where I come from. How do you like it now, cock of the loft? Do you want any more?"

"Not this voyage," rejoined Jolly, dismally; "you're best man."

"It's a pity you didn't find that out before," remarked Dick. "However, it's never too late to learn. Perhaps you will get our breakfast ready. I'm cock of the loft now. Do you understand that, Mr. Sam Jolly?"

"Don't crow, if you are cock," exclaimed Jolly; "I'm licked this time, but my turn may come. Sit down, and have your grub."

Dick was quite satisfied with his victory.

He shook hands with Jolly, and they all sat down together, making a comfortable breakfast, though the fare was not luxurious.

Messiter and Dick went on deck afterward, and hearing an altercation forward, ran in that direction.

Captain Simpson was beating a sailor with a marlinspike for some breach of discipline.

The crew looked on without interfering.

The sailor was a fine, handsome fellow, and in vain begged the tyrant to desist.

"Take that, Bill Bung," cried the captain, at each stroke, "and let us have no more of your mutinous conduct. I'll let you all know I'm captain, and will string you up to the yardarm, if you don't behave yourselves."

"I've done nothing," said Bill Bung; "it wasn't my watch, if—"

"You'll argue with me, will you?" interrupted the captain, recommencing his ill-treatment.

The poor fellow's face was streaming with blood, and Dick's blood began to boil.

Rushing forward, he seized the captain's arm, and exclaimed:

"Stop that—I won't have it!"

The next moment he was alarmed at his rashness.

What had he done?

Turning upon him with incredible fury, the captain exclaimed:

"How dare you speak to me, youngster! I'll break every bone in your skin!"

"No, you won't," answered Dick; "I've got a knife here, and if you touch me, you shall feel it. Knifing isn't my usual style of fighting, but it's fair with a man like you."

"He's threatened me with a knife; you heard him," said the captain. "Put him in irons—I'll have him flogged."

At a sign from the first mate, on whose face sat a smile of malicious satisfaction, four men fell upon Dick, whose arms were pinioned, and he was thrown on his back, where he lay helpless.

"Take him away," continued Captain Simpson. "I will deal with him presently. It's a pity I took the young whelp on board; he should have drowned if I'd have known what he was made of."

Strong arms lifted him up, and he was forced into a dark hole, near the cook's gallery, where he was half stifled with the heat and a smell of tar.

Everything had passed so quickly that he could scarcely realize what had happened till it was all over.

"I've done a nice thing," he reflected, "offended the captain, and the men are too much cowed to help me. It looks cheerful, I must say."

There was the prospect of being flogged, which was not pleasant, as he did not doubt the captain would keep his word.

In a miserable state of mind, but still very angry, Dick sat down in his gloomy prison, and wondered what would happen next.

The captain went moodily to his cabin, as if afraid to trust his temper any farther.

Bill Bung got a bucket of water, and washed the blood off his hands and face, grumbling to himself all the while.

While he was thus engaged, Messiter came up to him.

"What cheer?" said Messiter.

"Bad enough; I don't like it, my lad," replied the sailor.

"You took it quiet enough."

"Cos I couldn't help myself. The skipper's always going on like that with some of us."

"More fools you put up with it; I wouldn't. There is my friend, Dick Lightheart, going to be flogged till he's half dead, perhaps; none of you seem inclined to raise a hand to save him."

"I wouldn't stand it, boy, if the others would hang with me," replied Bill Bung, thoughtfully.

"Did you ever ask them?"

"Can't say as ever I did," said Bill, with a shake of the head.

"How can you tell, then? The crew musters about thirteen men, I suppose?"

"Fourteen and all told."

"What's to prevent you fellows taking your own part? You call yourself a man, and let yourself be beaten about the head like a hound. I am ashamed of you," cried Messiter.

"I'm a bit ashamed of myself; that's the truth, master."

"Talk to the men, and save Lightheart. If you are altogether, you can easily bind the captain and the mates."

"And get brought up before the British consul at the first port as mutineers," said Bill.

"You needn't hurt them. State your case to the consul, and no one will blame you. Lightheart stuck to you, and it would be cowardly in you to desert him now. If he is tied up, say you won't have it," urged Messiter.

"I'll talk to my messmates about it," rejoined Bill, "for blow me if I like it."

Messiter watched him go to a knot of seamen and begin to harangue them, and with a smile of satisfaction he said to himself:

"I thought the worm would turn at last. Dick must be got out of this somehow, if it's possible."

Ted came up, and looking very much concerned, asked Messiter what they were going to do to Master Dick.

"Cob him," answered Messiter.

"What for?"

"Interfering with the captain, who was behaving like a brute to one of the sailors."

"Will they hurt him?" asked the boy, with tears in his eyes.

"If they don't, it will be a very good imitation of it."

"They shan't," exclaimed Ted, boldly; "I'll run at them and bite their legs first, if I can't do anything else."

Messiter laughed, but Ted thought it no laughing matter.

"I'd rather ever so much they'd lick me instead. Do you think the captain will let me take the licking instead of Master Dick?" he went on.

"It isn't likely. What have you done?"

"Nothing, but if he wants to lick somebody, I'll bear a lashing as long as I can stand to save my young master," answered Ted.

"You're a good fellow, Ted," exclaimed Messiter. "In this case, though, you can't do any good. The captain's a tyrant, and too strong for us."

"Are we to stand by and see it done?" asked Ted indignantly.

"Perhaps it won't come to that."

"If it does, I'll do something desperate, that I will," said Ted. "It wouldn't matter thrashing me much—I'm nobody—I've been kicked and beat ever since I was two feet high. I'm used to it; but Master Dick's a gentleman, and he's been kind to me. If he hadn't saved me I should have drowned myself. They shan't hurt him."

"Hush," whispered Messiter. "Here comes the captain."

In fact, Captain Simpson had just come upon deck.

He had gone into his cabin to solace himself with a dram.

The spirits, however, only served to increase his agitation.

He saw that his control over his crew was becoming gradually weaker; like, and all tyrants, he fancied the only way to secure his power was by taking a high hand, and increasing his brutality.

"Mr. Prentice," he cried.

"Sir," replied the first mate, touching his cap.

"Let the prisoner be brought forward, and fell off the hands for punishment; muster them all. I mean to make an example."

The mate summoned the crew, all of whom trooped forward with a sullen and discontented air.

"Bung, step forward," continued the captain.

Bill Bung did so.

"Take this rope's end, and wait for my further orders."

He handed a thick tarred rope to him, which, as an instrument of punishment, was very formidable.

A rope's end will bruise and tear a man's back like a cat o' nine tails, and inflict more lasting pain.

"Bring out the prisoner," said the captain.

The first mate went to Dick and personally conducted him on deck.

"Now, my lad," said the captain, with a

brutal air, "I'm going to let you know what discipline is. Strip!"

Looking around him defiantly, Dick, whose arms were unbound by Mr. Prentice, did not move.

"Do you hear me?" thundered the captain. "Strip!"

"Captain Simpson," said Dick, quietly, "I protest against this treatment. You saved my life and those of my companions, for which I thank you."

"We would leave your ship at once if we could. As it is, we are unwilling passengers."

"You are part of the crew, and must work out your passage."

"Not at all. We have not signed articles, and you have no power over us so long as we conduct ourselves properly."

"Why did you interfere between me and one of my crew? But I'll waste no words with you," replied the captain. Tie him up to the foremast."

"You will repent this," said Dick, turning pale.

"I'll risk that. Make him fast," replied the captain, with a reckless laugh.

Mr. Prentice and Slowman, the second mate, seized Dick, and, despite his struggles, stripped him naked to the waist. Then they fastened him with a rope to the mast in such a way that he could not move.

Captain Simpson took out his watch, and, holding it in his hand, looked at it.

"Now, then, Bung," he said, "Lash away, and keep on until I tell you to stop?"

Bung hesitated.

Dick's back shone in the noon tide sun.

Messiter could have cried with vexation, but was powerless to interfere.

As for Ted, he could have flown at the captain like a wildcat and strangled him.

Perhaps he would have done so, if Messiter had not held him back.

"Wait," he said; "something may turn up yet."

"One—two—three. Start!" said the captain.

Bill Bung raised his stalwart arm, and the rope flew up in the air; but it fell down as suddenly.

"I can't do it, sir," he said; "it would break my heart, cappen, to hurt the lad. He interfered for me, and I ain't a brute beast."

"That is just why I selected you to punish him; it is a double punishment, for you will feel every blow you give him as he will. Go on, you fool! I'll have his back in a jelly before I've done with him."

Loud murmurs arose among the crew at this ferocious speech.

Bill Bung threw the rope on the deck, and walking away, joined his messmates.

"You won't obey orders!" shouted Captain Simpson. "Seize him, two of you, and put him in irons."

Not a man stirred.

"Mr. Prentice," said the captain, aghast, "what is this?"

"Mutiny, sir, I think; it looks like it," replied the first mate.

"If no one will flog him, I'll do it myself!" exclaimed the captain, grasping the rope's end.

He made it describe a circle in the air, and it descended on Dick's back with crushing violence.

The flesh was discolored, and became blue and swollen.

But not a cry broke from the courageous boy.

The captain was about to repeat his cruel treatment, when the men advanced in a body, and formed a line between him and Dick.

"Back, you scoundrels! Back, mutinous dogs!" exclaimed the captain, foaming at the mouth.

The solid line remained unmoving.

Both mates put themselves by the captain's side, as they feared a crisis was approaching, and they determined to side with the skipper.

"Look'ee here, cappen, said an old grizzled

sailor; "I've shipped aboard o' many vessels, and I've seen a few skippers, but never the likes o' you. We don't want to do you no harm, but we ain't a-goin' to stan' by and see that poor lad flogged half to death aco's he interfered for one o' us."

"I'll have you all tried at the first port I come to," exclaimed the captain.

"That ye may do, and welcome, but we'll all see as Bill Bung has his action agin you first, for hitting of him brutal," said the old seaman.

Mr. Prentice caught hold of the captain's arm.

"For Heaveu's sake, go below, and leave them to me," he said.

"Not I. Where are my pistols? I'll shoot some of the dogs."

"Be guided by me, sir. Let them alone this time, and tackle them one by one. If you don't, they'll do something desperate."

The captain mumbled something which was inaudible.

He was almost speechless with rage.

"They are just in the humor to seize the ship," continued the mate.

"You will stand by me?"

"To the death, and so will Mr. Slowman—but we are only three against so many."

"I did a nice thing, it seems to me, in picking up this youngster. Cut him loose. You are right, Mr. Prentice. I will bide my time."

Captain Simpson, though a passionate man, did not lose his senses.

The first mate obeyed the order with the greatest joy.

In a few moments Dick was free, and began to scratch his back with a ludicrous air, which made the men laugh.

"Something's been biting me, hasn't it?" he said.

The crew roared again.

"It's only a sting," said Dick. "Wonder what it was."

He began to put on his clothes leisurely.

"My lads," said the captain, "I forgive the boy this time, and look over your misconduct. Perhaps I was hasty, but don't do it again. Mr. Prentice?"

"Sir."

"Send out a double allowance of grog to the men."

"Yes, sir; it shall be done directly."

So easily are sailors managed or mismanaged that the men broke out into a hearty cheer.

"Have you done with me?" asked Dick, putting on his jacket, and coolly regarding the captain.

"For the present I have. Beware how you cross me again," was the reply.

"You've given me a great deal of trouble for nothing," said Dick, "It's a bore dressing and undressing, this hot weather. The sun is strong in these latitudes."

Suddenly the voice of the look-out man rang out clearly—

"A strange sail."

"Where away?" asked the captain.

"On the larboard bow, sir."

The captain took his telescope, and began to reconnoiter the strange sail.

Every one crowded to the side to have a look, and every eye was soon searching the horizon.

Even Dick shared the excitement.

He had a pocket glass, and brought it into use.

Messiter came to him and shook his hand.

"I am so glad you got off," he said.

"Don't worry me, Harry," exclaimed Dick. "I'm looking at the strange sail. One must have a little excitement now and then, or one couldn't live."

"You are a cool fish," said Messiter.

"Why not? What's the use of flurrying your fat? Take it easy, that's my motto. Free and easy, free and easy, I'll be free and easy still," sang Dick. "But look,"

added Dick, excitedly, "the strange sail is bearing down upon us!"

CHAPTER III.

THE STRANGE SAIL ON THE LARBOARD BOW.

AFTER a minute inspection, the captain of the *Indiana*, handed the glass to the first mate.

"I can't make it out, Mr. Prentice," he said.

After a momentary pause, the mate replied.

"Seems to me, sir, like a raft with a shipwrecked person on board."

"That occurred to me."

"Shall we bear down, sir?"

"I've had enough of picking up people," said the captain, with a grim smile. "But I suppose that common humanity suggests such a course."

The necessary orders were given to the ship's crew and the *Indiana* bore down upon the strange sail.

It was soon discovered that the sail was nothing more or less than a man clinging to a hen-coop, who had taken off his shirt and hoisted it on high to attract attention.

When he was neared, a boat was lowered, and the unfortunate man picked up and brought on board.

He was a little, wiry man, about forty-five years of age, with a sharp, intelligent face, and an expression of anything but good temper.

As he stepped on deck, he exclaimed:

"Which is the captain of this vessel?"

"I am," replied Captain Simpson.

"You've been a long time picking me up. What do you mean by it?" said the little man.

"That's a cool remark," said the captain, "considering we have, in all probability, saved your life."

"And if you have, you only did your duty. Where is your cabin? Give me some fresh clothes immediately, and something to eat and drink."

"You've got a nerve," said the captain, inclined to be angry. "I've a good mind never to save any one again."

"That will not matter much to me. You are not likely to save me twice."

"Why not?"

"It will be your turn next," said the little man.

"What do you mean?"

"What I say, sir. My name is Crawley Crab, sir. Do you hear? Crawley Crab."

"You speak loud enough," replied the captain.

"Bah!" said Mr. Crawley Crab; "its evident you are not a man of science, or you would have heard of me. I have written books, sir—books!"

"What then?"

"Why, sir, I am a famous man. My position in life is that of Secretary to the Society for the Exploration of the Unknown Parts of the World, sir, and I am making my third voyage."

"How were you wrecked?"

"That is the strangest thing. But give me to eat and drink, clothe me, and you shall hear."

"Speak first, and then I'll think of it, Mr. Crab," said the captain.

The conversation was audible enough to be heard by all on board, who crowded round the speakers in a way that showed how severely discipline on board the *Indiana* had been interfered with by the late occurrence.

"Well, well, well," cried the little man, irritably, "what a boy you are. I left England last week on board the *General Johnstone*."

"I know her," said the first mate. "Government ship, isn't she?"

"Be good enough, my dear sir, not to interrupt me," rejoined Mr. Crawley Crab. "I cannot tell my story if I am interrupted. What does it matter to the cause of science whether an insignificant individual like you

knows or doesn't know the General Johnstone?"

"Go on, sir. Sorry I spoke."

"So you ought to be. Don't do it again. Well, sir, this ship was fitted up with a great expense, in order that I and other scientific men might make discoveries. Do you see?"

"Not clearly as yet," answered the captain.

"Tush, tush! be quiet," exclaimed the irritable little man; "don't interrupt me. This morning, about eight o'clock, we were struck amidships, but below the water line, by a wonderful sea monster, which nearly cut us in two."

"Did the ship sink?"

"She did almost directly afterwards. I seized a hen-coop, and here I am."

"A monster cut you in two!" exclaimed the captain, opening his eyes. "What sort of a monster? Did you see it?"

"We did for a few minutes. It was black and long, like a gigantic eel, and threw out phosphorescent light."

"Then there was something electric about it?" remarked the first mate.

"Undoubtedly."

"That's a strange yarn," observed the captain,

"It may be strange, but it's true, and I will tell you that in all my travels and all my reading I never heard of such a creature before. Never, as sure as my name is Crawley Crab."

"Is he cruising still in these latitudes?" asked Captain Simpson.

"Of course he is. He can't be far off."

"Bill Bung," cried the captain.

"Sir," said Bill, reporting himself.

"You have been in a whaler, I think?"

"Yes, sir; two years, when I was a lad."

"Can you harpoon?"

"Show me a whale or a shark, and try me. I've got my 'poon with me in my chest, and should like to have the chance," replied Bill.

"Get it ready, then—it may soon be wanted," said the captain.

He took Mr. Crawley Crab, the Secretary of the Society for the Exploration of the Unknown Parts of the World into his cabin, gave him dry clothes, and provided him with the best dinner the resources of the ship could afford.

Dick had listened curiously to the conversation between Captain Simpson and Mr. Crab.

Taking Messiter's arm, he said:

"That's a wonderful yarn of that fellow who has just come on board."

"Very," replied Messiter.

"I don't know what to make of it, exactly. A fish is a fish, and unless it has a big horn it can't sink a ship."

"Perhaps he's cracked," said Messiter.

"Not he. There is something in it. The man is sane enough. He has been wrecked, and he has told his story plainly enough, only I don't believe in the strange animal."

"What is it, then?"

"That's the mystery. There can't be any rocks in the middle of the sea. It isn't a rock," said Dick.

"Then it must be a wonderful fish."

"I hope we shall see it," exclaimed Dick.

"I hope it won't sink us," replied Messiter.

At this moment Ted approached and said:

"Glad you wasn't hurt, Master Dick."

"Hurt, you young rascal," answered Dick.

"If you had a rope's end laid across your back, would you feel it?"

"I suppose so, sir."

"So did I; but I wasn't going to make a song about it; all I know is, I was very glad there was only one of them."

"If Mr. Messiter would have let me, I'd have bit the captain's legs," said Ted.

"And very likely got your teeth kicked out. I'm much obliged to you, Ted, for your kind intentions," replied Dick, "but you was best out of it."

A couple of hours passed.

Mr. Crawley Crab came on deck, arm in arm with Captain Simpson.

Dick saw at a glance that Mr. Crab was a character, and meant to study him.

After a time, Mr. Crawley Crab left the captain, and met Dick.

"Nice weather, my lad," he exclaimed.

"Who are you calling 'my lad'?" asked Dick.

"You're one of the crew, I suppose, and you needn't be so snappish."

"I'm a passenger," replied Dick, "and my name is Lighthouse. Sorry I haven't got a card, but I was wrecked yesterday, and that will account for it."

"Indeed! I presume you were picked up as I was? Did you meet with the singular animal that destroyed my ship?"

"Can't say I did. What was he like? asked Dick.

"A huge long thing, covered with scales, half in, half out of the water," replied Crawley Crab.

"Are we likely to meet with him again?"

"I should think so," answered Mr. Crab. Suddenly he exclaimed :

"Look there!"

"Where?" exclaimed Dick.

"To the right. There. I don't understand those confounded sea terms, and I don't know larboard from starboard, but on my right is the creature."

"The dreaded animal?" asked Dick, with a laugh.

"Yes. Look!"

Dick followed the direction of the outstretched arm, and beheld a curious sight.

Not far from the ship was a long, black-looking thing, lying like a log on the water.

No phosphorescent light came from it.

It seemed silent and motionless.

"Sort of sea-serpent I should think," he continued.

"Can't tell," answered Mr. Crab. "Where's the captain! We must fire at it, harpoon it, or do something, or else I shall be wrecked again."

"Try another hen-coop, sir."

"Not if I can help it, my young friend. Four hours in one day, on a floating hen-coop, on the bosom of the briny deep, is quite enough for any ordinary man," replied Mr. Crab, with a grim smile.

Bill Bung came by, and Dick said:

"Pass the word for the skipper."

"Aye, aye, sir," replied Bill. "Glad you got out of that scrape, sir," he added.

"Thanks to you."

"It was tit for tat. You did as much for me."

"And would again. Call the captain. We have the monster on our lee," exclaimed Dick, who was strangely excited about the marvelous thing he saw floating down to them.

"The what, sir?"

"The monster."

Bill Bung took one glance at the sea.

It was quite enough for him.

"There is a curse on the ship," he exclaimed. "I knew how it would be. We sailed on a Friday, and the first mate shot an albatross the second day we were out. We're doomed! we're doomed!"

And he went aft, repeating the sinister words, "We're doomed! we're doomed!"

CHAPTER IV.

"A MONSTER OF THE DEEP."

CAPTAIN SIMPSON at once came on deck, and was soon busily engaged looking at the wonderful creature which Crawley Crab declared had sunk the ship in which he had been sailing.

The crew were much agitated.

Seamen are at all times superstitious, and never having heard of such a strange monster, they fancied its appearance boded them no good.

The weather, which had hitherto been favorable, now changed.

Dark, heavy clouds flew up from the south.

The sea hissed and boiled in an uneasy manner, and the wind whistled funereally through the straining cordage.

It was evident to the practiced eye of the captain that a violent storm was at hand.

In a clear and collected voice he quickly gave orders to make all taut, and was soon riding snugly under close-reefed topsails.

Suddenly the storm burst in all its fury.

The thunder crashed, while the forked and vivid tongues of lightning played round the vessel in streams of bluish fire, and the darkness was intense.

The monster, which had been perfectly inert up to this time, threw out a marvelous light, which illuminated the depths of the sea.

The magnificent irradiation was evidently the result of electricity, and it revealed the shape of the strange fish, if fish it was, very distinctly.

Its form was what we may call a lengthened oval, tapering off at the head and tail, which were under the water, only part of the scaly back being exposed to the air.

With a strange hissing noise it all at once sank to the bottom of the sea, and was seen no more.

"It has disappeared," exclaimed the captain.

The sailors breathed a sigh of delight.

"I would have given a hundred pounds," said Crawley Crab, "if we could have captured it."

"For my part," replied the captain, "I am glad it is gone. No good ever comes of meddling with such singular things. What do you, Mr. Crab, as a scientific man, take it to be?"

"I fancy, sir," answered Mr. Crab, "it must be some extraordinary species of electric eel. That there are huge deep sea snakes I have never doubted."

"Ah! we know very little of what lives at the bottom of the sea," answered the captain.

The storm was not of long duration.

Heavy torrents of rain succeeded the war of the elements, and toward night the sea calmed itself, the wind went down, and a placid moon, beaming from the serene, star-studded sky, shed its silvery light upon the still heaving waves.

The mutinous spirit of the wind had died away.

Captain Simpson did not attempt to tyrannize over the crew any more, and the boys were left to themselves, doing very much as they pleased.

Out of good nature and a love of activity, they gladly lent the apprentices a hand when there was any work to be done.

Dick was looking over the side soon after the moon had risen, and to his astonishment he saw something rise in their wake, making a splashing noise, and then laying perfectly still.

It was undoubtedly the monster, which had risen again from the depths of the ocean, now that the storm was over.

He uttered a shout.

Crawley Crab, who was on deck, was astonished at the cry, and hastened to his side in a moment.

"Is it the strange creature again?" he asked nervously.

"Yes, sir; there she lies," said Dick.

As he spoke, the marvelous thing broke out around him, quite dazzling in its brilliancy.

Crawley Crab called the captain.

"Sir," he said, "the monster is again close to us. I ask you, in the interests of science, to capture it."

"Who's going to do it, and how is it to be done?" said Captain Simpson.

"This thing is a scourge of the ocean. It destroys ships, therefore it is your duty to destroy it," persisted the man of science.

"We will harpoon it, if you like, though I

do not know why I should risk the lives of my crew. Where's Bung? Pass the word for Bung," said the captain.

When Bill Bung made his appearance, he was trembling like a leaf.

He was a brave man, and had faced death many a time, but he, in conjunction with his messmates, had again beheld the monster, which they thought must be something supernatural.

"Get your harpoon, my man," said the captain.

"Not me, sir," said Bung, firmly. "I wouldn't harm a scale of the critter's back was it ever so. We shall all be sent to the bottom of the sea, if I do."

Turning to Mr. Crab the captain said:

"You see the feelings of my men; what can I do?"

"I'll do it myself," said the man of science, grandly. "If no one will attack this chimera, sir, the honor and glory of the task shall belong to me, sir."

"You, Mr. Crab?"

"I sir. Give me a boat and loaded guns. It will be hard, indeed, if I cannot put a bullet in him, and lay the mighty brute low. Who will volunteer for this splendid task?"

There was no response.

"What! Are you all cowards? Will no one volunteer?" continued the man of science, scornfully.

Dick stepped forward.

"I'm on, sir," he exclaimed. "Can't stand by and see a gentleman left alone. I'm not afraid of the creature."

Messiter, as a matter of course, took his place by Dick Lightheart's side.

So did Teddy.

Where Dick went, his devoted friend and equally attached follower felt bound to go as a matter of duty.

"Three of you! Bravo!" cried Mr. Crab. "Now, sir, we are four, and we shall triumph. Lower a boat, if you please."

The order was given to put the ship about, and a spot favorable to the enterprise being selected near the monster, a boat was lowered, into which the volunteers descended.

Messiter and Teddy took the oars, Dick grasped the tiller, and Crawley Crab stood at the bows with a loaded gun under each arm.

"My four troublesome customers," said the captain, in a low tone to the first mate, "stand a very good chance of never returning."

"It will be a cheap get rid of them, if it cost us the boat," said the mate in the same tone.

Bill Bung was much impressed with the bravery of the little party, though he would not have joined them for the world.

"Give 'em three cheers, my lads," he said. "Shiver my timbers, but they deserve it for their pluck."

Three hearty cheers broke out, and traveled, as it appeared, to the ears of the sleeping monster, for in an instant the bright electric light went out, and the creature was almost imperceptible in the darkness of the night.

The moon, however, served to indicate his whereabouts, and the boys pulled steadily towards him.

"Steady, my lads," said Crawley Crab. "Easy all; keep the head before the wind, Mr. Lightheart, if you please."

"Steady she is, sir," answered Dick.

The boat stopped at a short distance from the monster.

Crawley Crab stood up, placed a gun to his shoulder and fired.

The ball struck the huge slumbering beast, but glided off its back, as if it had struck a piece of polished steel.

"Hard as the hide of a rhinoceros," said the man of science; we must try again. Steady, boys." The monster, however, did not approve of being shot at.

It seemed to tremble violently for a moment.

Then with incredible velocity it darted past

the boat, which was upset in a moment, and proceeded to strike the *Indiana*.

It struck the unfortunate vessel amidships.

The crash was distinctly audible, and amidst the noise of falling masts and flapping sails, were heard the cries of the sailors and the moans of the dying.

After the concussion the monster retired as it had come.

A cloud obscured the surface of the moon, and it was difficult to tell where it had gone, or what had become of the *Indiana*.

Dick found himself struggling in the sea, and wondered what had become of his companions.

"Bother those monsters of the deep," he said to himself, "I don't like them."

Swimming gently, he got hold of one of the oars of the boat, and so kept himself afloat without much exertion.

It was not a hopeful position to be in.

Struggling alone in the middle of a vast ocean, ignorant of the fate of his companions, and doubtful of succor, it was not to be wondered at if he felt inclined to despair.

CHAPTER V.

AFLOAT ON THE OCEAN.

Dick little imagined at that moment what a strange influence over his career the marvelous monster that had broken up the boat was to have.

Such creatures of chance are we that we never know one moment what may happen to us the next!

He thought of his home, of the girl he loved, of his school at Brighton, which he had so lately quitted.

"Well," he said, aloud, "I like adventures, and now I have met with a beautiful one. Perhaps I shall be picked up. Perhaps not. No matter. One must die some day. Still it is uncommonly hard to die so young."

As one is emerging from youth to manhood, the world seems so beautiful and enticing; we have so much to see, to learn, to enjoy.

"Hullo! Hi! What cheer? Ship ahoy!" he cried.

He had scarcely closed his lips, after this appeal for help, when he felt his arm seized vigorously.

"Who are you?" he asked.

"If you will lean upon my shoulder, sir," was the reply, "you will soon gain strength and swim better."

"Is it you, Ted?" said Dick, recognizing the voice of his faithful servitor.

"At your service, Master Dick. I have been swimming about everywhere looking for you ever since that submarine beast swamped us. Ugh! What a terrible brute it is. It laughs at bullets, and cares no more for a ship than I should for kicking over a stool."

"Is no one saved?"

"I can't tell any more than you, sir; all I thought of was to swim after you."

"Why," said Dick, "you are more like a Newfoundland pup than anything else."

"I've been brought up to it, sir. That's it. Water's my native element, I may say."

"Take one end of my oar and hang on. Do you think the *Indiana* will pick us up?"

"I'm afraid, sir, from the way in which she cracked up when the monster charged her, that she is either floating a helpless wreck, or gone down with all hands aboard her."

"Then it's all up with us," said Dick, dismal.

"Perhaps," replied Ted; "but we shan't give in for some hours, and lots of things may turn up in that time."

Dick felt cheered by the philosophic spirit of his companion.

Nevertheless, the situation was as terrible a one as can well be imagined.

Those on board the *Indiana* were in too much trouble, if they were yet living, to think of the perils of the others who had courted

destruction by going in the boat to attack the monster.

Nor would Captain Simpson feel very friendly disposed toward them, because it was Crawley Crab's shot that caused the slumbering creature to rush madly upon the vessel.

Dick began to calculate the chances of safety.

If the *Indiana* had not foundered, the crew might lower another boat in the morning to search for them.

The sun would not rise for about eight hours.

Could they exist so long in the water without fainting or becoming cramped by the sluggish circulation of the blood?

In vain he tried to pierce the dense darkness which surrounded them, for now the moon had disappeared, and bad weather seemed imminent again.

The luminous waves broke up against his chilled hands.

About two o'clock in the morning Dick was seized with extreme fatigue; his limbs were a prey to an agonizing cramp.

Ted put his arm round him, but he drew his breath with difficulty, and evidently required all his strength for himself.

"Let me go, Ted," said Dick: "save yourself."

"Certainly not, sir," said Ted; "you won't refuse my last wish, and that is to be drowned with you, if it comes to that."

At that moment the moon appeared again from under the edge of a thick cloud, which had concealed it for a time.

The surface of the sea sparkled under its rays.

This fortunate light put new strength into the boys.

Dick searched the horizon with eager, careful gaze.

He saw the *Indiana*, or what appeared to be her, about five miles off, looking like a sombre, inert mass, but there was no sign of a boat.

At first he was inclined to cry for help, but of what use would it have been at that distance?

His lips, moreover, trembled and his teeth chattered, so that he could scarcely speak.

Ted had more power left.

He exclaimed:

"Here, this way! Hi! help, help!"

Was it one of those delusive sounds which the anxious mind sometimes conjures up?

Or did an answer really come to the lad's cry for help?

"Did you hear anything?" he asked.

"Yes, I thought so," said Ted.

He began to cry out again.

"Help, help!"

This time there was no mistake.

A human voice clearly responded to his.

Ted lifted himself as high out of the water as he could, and taking a look, fell back exhausted, clinging desperately to the oar.

"Did you see anything?" asked Dick, anxiously.

"Yes; don't talk, sir; we want all our strength," answered Ted.

There was a hopeful ring in his voice which inspired Dick, who, however, fancied he heard the boy sigh almost directly afterwards.

He thought of the monster.

Was it still near them? But if so, whence came the voice?

They began to swim with all the strength they had left, and after some minutes of continual exertion, for moving was a painful task in their state, Ted spoke again,

"Are you far off?" he said.

"Not far; push on," said the voice, which Dick fancied he knew.

Dick's strength was leaving him fast.

He was very cold.

Had it not been for Ted he must have sunk.

Suddenly an outstretched hand seized him; he was pulled violently out of the water, just as his senses were going, and, after some one

had rubbed his hands vigorously, he opened his eyes and murmured—

"Ted."

"Here, sir," replied the lad.

By the rays of the moon, Dick saw a figure which was not Ted, but which he recognized easily.

"Mr. Crab?" he said.

"Right, my lad," answered the man of science. "Crawley Crab, as you see me, safe and sound."

"Where is Messiter?"

"Here, Dick," answered Messiter. "Mr. Crab and I stuck together, and our only concern has been for you."

"Where the deuce are we?" asked Dick, puzzled; "this thing I am sitting on seems firm enough."

"It's a floating island," answered Mr. Crab.

A horrible thought crossed Dick's mind, to which he could not give expression.

"To put you out of your misery at once," continued Crawley Crab, "we are on the back of the gigantic creature at whom I shot, and I know now why I did not kill him."

"Why?"

"Because he is iron-clad, or something very like it. I can make no impression upon the scaly monster with my knife."

These words produced a strange feeling in Dick's mind. He found that he was really with his friends on the back of the monster, which continued to float on the surface, after causing the partial destruction of the *Indiana*.

He got up and stamped his foot.

It was certainly a hard, impenetrable body, and not the soft substance of which all the marine inhabitants that he had heard of were made, such as whales, sharks, walruses, and the like.

If anything, it more resembled a tortoise or an alligator.

A hollow sound was emitted when it was struck, and it appeared to be made of cast-iron plates secured together.

"What is your opinion of the creature, sir?" asked Dick.

"You want my candid opinion as a man of science?" said Mr. Crab.

"Certainly, sir."

"I should say, then, that this peculiarly-constructed monster is the result of human hands and ingenuity."

"In that case it is not a monster at all."

"By no means," said Mr. Crab. "I am very much in the dark at present, but I am positive that there is some wonderful mystery about this thing, which to my mind is a sort of submarine ship, ingeniously constructed to sail under the water for a time, and to come to the surface for a supply of fresh air from time to time."

"If that's so, sir," said Dick, "there must be some internal mechanism to make it work about."

"Evidently."

"It gives no sign of life."

"Not at present," answered the man of science. "But we have seen it move. It has appeared and disappeared. Consequently, it must have hidden machinery."

"Of course."

"So that we come to the conclusion, which is inevitable, that there must be a man or men inside to direct the ship."

"Hurrah!" cried Dick; "I didn't think of that. We are saved if that is so, and it must be as you say."

"Hum!" muttered the professor; "I don't know so much about that."

"The fact is this," he continued. "If, when it makes a start, it glides along the surface of the water, we are all right; but if it goes down, we are lost."

"I've got an idea," said Dick, after a pause.

"Let's have it."

"We must knock at the door and see if we can find any one at home."

His companion laughed.

"I have searched carefully," said Messiter,

"but I can't find even a man-hole. Oh, I wish I was back again at school."

"So don't I," said Dick. "Shut up snivelling, Harry; don't show the white feather."

"I can't help it. When I meet with things I understand I am all right, but when I come across things like this, it is enough to frighten any fellow," said Messiter.

There was nothing for it but to remain until morning.

Dick wanted to keep his feet warm, so he amused himself by kicking his heels upon the body beneath him.

"I'll wake 'em up," he said. "They shan't sleep if they won't let me in."

Their safety absolutely depended on the caprice of the mysterious steersman who inhabited the iron-clad, fish-shaped machine.

It seemed to the professor that before they descended again they would have to open some hole to obtain air.

If so, they could communicate with them and would be saved.

But saved for what fate?

He scarcely dared to ask himself.

The beings who inhabited that singular structure clearly had a secret to guard, and might not shrink from murdering their captives or dooming them to a life-long imprisonment.

All were now very tired, wet and hungry.

A raging thirst began to attack them.

Dick fancied he heard vague sounds beneath him, but could not be sure.

Who were the strange beings that lived in the floating iron shell?

Kicking angrily upon the iron surface, Dick said:

"You are very inhospitable inside. I am hungry and thirsty. Do you want me to die up here?"

He had no sooner spoken than a flap beside him opened.

Half the body of a strong, wiry, thick-bearded man appeared.

An arm encircled his waist, and Dick felt himself dragged down into the interior of the iron shell.

A cry of terror broke from his companions.

This was answered by a smothered cry from Dick, as the flap fell back and shut out any further view of the interior.

Dick had vanished.

CHAPTER VI.

INSIDE THE MONSTER.

THIS removal, so brutally executed, was accomplished with the rapidity of lightning.

Crawley Crab felt his hair stand on end.

As to Messiter, he was chilled to the marrow of his bones with fear.

"What have they done with him?" he asked.

"Your friend Lightheart is the first victim," replied the professor. "Perhaps they mean to eat him. For my part, they may eat me as soon as they like; anything is preferable to this."

"I wish I could get at them," replied Teddy. "I'd soon have my young master out."

The words were scarcely out of his mouth when the trap-door opened again, and Teddy was dragged down below in a similar manner.

"Really, this is very extraordinary," said the professor; "two of us are gone. Just as if we had been swallowed by a whale."

"Can this be a monster, after all, and the trap-door his mouth, through which he takes in his food?" asked Messiter.

"No, my boy," replied the professor; "we are no doubt in the hands of pirates, wretched rovers of the sea, who have brought science to their aid. It is to be hoped that they will respect the person of the Secretary of the Society for the Exploration of the Unknown Parts of the World. If not, I threaten them with the vengeance of all civilized Europe, for my learned books have been read everywhere, and—"

The door opened while he was speaking, and a long arm twining round his waist, dragged him, too, into the heart of this floating prison.

His legs kicking up ludicrously in the air, attracted the attention of Messiter, who could not refrain from laughing, miserable though he was.

"My turn next," muttered Messiter.

He was not long kept in suspense.

The long arm twined, snake-like, round him, and he, too, descended into the bowels of the infernal machine.

Dick's experience was that of all of them.

He had descended an iron ladder, was pushed into a room, the door of which shut to with a heavy bang.

In ten minutes they were altogether in the same compartment.

The darkness of their prison was so intense as to prevent Dick seeing his hand before his face.

Thus it was impossible to guess where they were, or even to tell if they were alone or not.

"This is an outrage," said Mr. Crab. "I protest against it. Is the author of a dozen immortal works to be treated like a naughty schoolboy?"

"We're up a tree," remarked Dick, "and it's no use hallooing. They're not going to eat us. This isn't an oven, and I think we are better here than up above."

"At least we had our liberty," continued Crawley Crab, who was never satisfied or happy unless he was at work or grumbling.

"I've got a knife," said Ted, boldly, "and I'll stick the first that comes near me. It's a regular pig-sticker, my knife, and I'll bet they feel it."

"Don't you do anything of the sort, Ned," cried Dick. "You might get us all killed."

"It's very hard, sir, if a poor bloke can't do something."

"You'll get it hot if any one is listening to you," continued Dick. "If you don't care for yourself, think of us."

Ted grumbled inaudibly, and Dick began to take the dimensions of the prison in which they were.

This he did by walking about, and he made it twenty feet long by ten wide.

The walls were of iron, made of plates riveted together.

Half an hour passed.

At the expiration of that time the cabin was illuminated by a flood of light so vivid and blinding that it was difficult to bear the intensity.

Dick recognized the electric light that had floated round the ship when he first saw it.

When he got used to its clear whiteness, he looked up and saw that it proceeded from a globe which hung from the ceiling.

"Light at last; our captors are becoming more civil," said Mr. Crab, rubbing his hands gaily.

"It's about time, I think," answered Dick.

They were not much better off, however, for the cabin only contained a table and five wooden stools, but the light was refreshing, and made them more cheerful.

Not a sound reached their ears; everywhere reigned the silence of the grave.

Perhaps the ship had sunk to the bottom of the ocean, for it seemed to have the power of going where its strange owner wished.

In a short time the door opened, and two men appeared.

One was a negro of the Southern States of America type, with intelligent but flat face, and short woolly hair.

The other was a tall, handsome white man, with keen, searching eyes, that looked into the very soul.

He wore a thick mustache, whiskers, and beard, and appeared to be an Englishman.

His expression was sad in the extreme.

It gave the beholder the idea that he was the victim of remorse, either for some great crime, or for some awful calamity which had befallen him.

Evidently proud, and born to command, he was to all appearance the captain of the vessel, for the negro treated him with the utmost respect.

He regarded the prisoners with a fixed gaze and said something to the negro in an unknown language, which was so sweet and soft that it seemed to be all vowels and no consonants.

At length he fixed his eyes upon Mr. Crab, who, as the eldest of the party, seemed to be the leader of it. The professor made a low bow.

"I presume," he said, "that I am in the presence of the proprietor of this singular machine, and, as I am a man of science, I respect one who could conceive and carry out the idea of a submarine ship."

There was no answer.

"Permit me to tell you our history," continued the professor.

Still no reply.

"He's remarkably polite," remarked Dick. "Perhaps he don't understand our language."

"Leave him to me," said the professor; "My name may have an effect upon him. I am, sir, Mr. Crawley Crab, professor of natural history, and Secretary to the Society for the Exploration of the Unknown Parts of the World. I have written valuable books, sir, which have been translated into foreign languages, sir."

The professor paused to look proudly around him.

Nothing in the sad man's face indicated that he understood one word.

Undaunted by this silence, Crawley Crab continued:

"This, sir, is my friend, Mr. Lightheart. This my friend, Mr. Messiter, both of Brighton, and sons of gentlemen. The lad is their servant."

There was still no answer.

The professor grew cross.

He spoke in French, then in German, finally in Greek and Latin; but with the same disheartening effect.

"I have recounted our Odyssey in five languages," said the professor, in despair, "and he does not understand a word. Where could he have been educated?"

"Leave him to me," said Dick. "I'll speak to him in the universal language."

"What may that be?"

"Wait a bit and you'll see."

Dick went up to the man with the sad but aristocratic and commanding face.

"Look here, governor," he said, pointing to his stomach; "see that. It's empty. Look at this," he added, pointing to his mouth. "That wants filling—twig? If it's only a bit of tommy and a glass of water, I shan't say No to it."

Not a muscle of the stranger's face moved.

Turning to the right, he muttered some words in his incomprehensible language, and, without making any reassuring sign to the prisoners, turned on his heel and walked away.

The door closed after him.

"Well, I'm blowed!" said Dick. "This is a queer go, and no mistake. If he doesn't speak English, French, German, Greek, or Latin, what does he speak? Is it the king of the sea?—is he Neptune himself?"

"What a face! What intelligence! What spirit!" said the professor, clasping his hands together admiringly. "I never saw such a man."

"I don't want to see another like him," answered Dick. "One cove like that in a lifetime is quite enough for me."

"It's my opinion," remarked Messiter, "that he's kidding."

"What do you mean?" asked Dick.

"I believe he understood us all along, but he didn't want to say anything, because he has not yet made up his mind what to do with us."

"I know one thing," said Dick, "that is, I am dying with hunger."

"If they would only give me a saucepan,

and a fire, Master Dick," said Ted, "I'd make some soup."

"How?"

"I've got my boots, and the swell cove who came in, let his sealskin cap fall. I picked it up and sneaked it. The two together wouldn't make bad soup."

While he spoke, the door opened again, and another negro entered with a tray, upon which were four plates.

A savory smell issued from them. Knives and forks were provided, and having placed the plates on the table the negro raised the covers.

"Another nigger," said Messiter. "They seem to grow here."

"Grub," said Dick, "that's good."

"Not up to much, Master Dick, I'll bet," observed Ted.

"What do you know about it?"

"What can they give us? Porpoise stew, fillets of dog-fish or stewed shark, I'd rather have some salt junk on board the *Indiana*."

The negro disappeared with the covers, and all but Teddy sat down.

"Fire away, Teddy," said Dick, looking at the dishes.

"After you, sir; I can wait," replied Teddy.

"Sit down, I tell you. When people are shipwrecked, they are all equal. Pitch in," answered Dick.

Teddy sat down. There was no bread and wine, but a bottle of water supplied its place.

It was difficult to say what the dinner consisted of. It was a mixture of fish and vegetable matter, but not an atom of meat.

Delicately cooked, and its flavor was good and pleased the palate.

On each plate, each knife and fork, was stamped this sinister motto:

DEAD TO THE WORLD.

N.

This was peculiarly appropriate to the life the inhabitants of this remarkable vessel lived.

Dead to the world!

That they seemed to be in fact, while the letter N was doubtless the first letter of the proprietor's name.

For some time no one spoke. The business of eating was all-absorbing, for one must eat, especially after a shipwreck.

It was consoling to reflect they were destined to die of hunger.

"I think, exclaimed Teddy, when he had finished his plate, "that they mean to fatten us before they kill us."

"Hold your tongue, Ted, till you are spoken to," said Dick.

"Yes, sir. I know I'm only an odd boy, but—"

"Shut up, I tell you. I want to go to sleep," exclaimed Dick.

"Certainly, sir. Sorry I took the liberty, but if I don't talk to somebody I must talk to myself."

"Try it on, that's all, and if you wake me when I'm asleep I'll give you something for yourself. I'm just getting dry, and shall sleep like a top," answered Dick, throwing himself in a corner.

The professor, who was worn out, had already chosen his corner.

Messiter followed his example, and soon they all slept.

Teddy, however, was the last to lie down, and, before doing so, he, with a devotion that was quite touching, took off his jacket, and, folding it up, laid it under his young master's head.

"It will make him a pillow," he muttered, "and I shan't miss it."

CHAPTER VII.

CAPTAIN NEMO.

How long he slept Dick did not know.

He woke first, and saw his companions snoring like most boys.

Nothing was changed in the apartment, ex-

cept that the remains of the dinner had been removed.

It was with difficulty that he managed to breathe, and he guessed that he had consumed all the oxygen in his prison. His lungs were oppressed, and the heavy air was not sufficient for proper respiration.

How did the commander manage?

Did he obtain air by chemical means; manufacturing it by means of chlorate of potash, and absorbing the carbonic acid by caustic of potash, or did he compress air in large reservoirs?

While Dick was revolving these questions in his mind, a valve opened in the side of the room, and a fresh current of sea air swept into the cabin.

Evidently the vessel had ascended to the surface of the ocean, and taken in a fresh supply of air.

The others, influenced by the invigorating atmosphere, woke up, and rubbing their eyes, started to their feet.

Teddy looked at Dick, and said, "Have you slept well, sir?"

"Pretty well," replied Dick. "How are you, Mr. Professor?"

"I breath the sea air, sir, and I am content," answered Crewley Crab. "How long have we slept? It must be four-and-twenty hours, at least, for I am hungry again; I cannot tell to a certainty for my watch has stopped."

"There is one comfort," replied Dick, "we are not in the hands of cannibals, and we shall be well treated."

"I don't know that, sir," replied Teddy. "They've got no fresh meat on board; all they gave us yesterday was fishy stuff, and four fine, fat, healthy fellows—"

"Shut up, Teddy," cried Dick; "how often am I to tell you to hold your tongue?"

"I know I'm only an odd boy, sir, but—"

"Will you be quiet?" exclaimed Dick, taking up a stool threateningly.

"All right, sir," replied Ted, "I won't say anything more."

"Say your grace," observed Messiter: "open your mouth, and wait for what Providence will send you."

Mr. Crawley Crab was very silent and thoughtful.

Dick remarked this and said:

"How long do you think they will keep us here, sir?"

"I can't tell any more than you, Lightheart," replied the professor.

"But what is your opinion?"

"Not a very encouraging one. We have by chance become possessed of an important secret. If the secret is worth more than our lives, we shall either be killed or kept prisoners."

"For ever?"

"Yes, for ever," answered the professor, gravely. "If the secret is not very serious, we may be landed on some island. I advise that we remain perfectly quiet, and take things as they come."

"May I say a word, sir?" exclaimed Ted.

"Well?" asked Dick.

"I'll get out of this," replied Ted.

"How? It is difficult to break out of a prison on earth, but to get out of one under the sea is impossible."

"Suppose we kill our gaolers, and take the key? If four Englishmen aren't a match for a lot of niggers, and one cove who can't speak any language, and doesn't belong to any country at all, it's time we shut up shop, and cried a go," replied Ted.

At that moment the door opened, and the negro who had before appeared entered.

Ted instantly threw himself upon him, and, seizing his throat with his two hands, held him so tightly as almost to strangle him.

But being a powerful man, he soon disengaged himself, and a fearful struggle ensued between them.

"Help, help!" cried the negro, in excellent English.

Ted let go his hold at this, and fell back laughing.

"So you can talk English!" he cried; "that's all right. I only flew at you to see what countryman you were. Now, then, tell us all about this ship, or I'll give you another dose."

Putting his finger to his lips, the negro gave a peculiar whistle—prolonged and shrill. This was evidently a signal.

He had scarcely finished when the captain appeared on the threshold.

His sad face was lighted up with an expression of anger, before which even the impetuous Ted recoiled.

"Go!" he said to the negro, who immediately departed.

Sitting down on the edge of the table, with his arms crossed on his powerful chest, this strange being seemed plunged in deep thought.

Our heroes regarded him with expectation, not unmixed with awe.

They were entirely in his power.

Was he about to punish them for the indiscretion of one of their number?

At length he spoke in English.

"Gentlemen," he said, "you see I can speak your language. I did not answer you at first, because I was undecided what to do with you. I am well acquainted with the scientific works written by Professor Crab, and I esteem it an honor to have made his acquaintance."

The professor bowed in acknowledgment of this compliment.

"I am also glad to see two intelligent young gentlemen like Mr. Lightheart and Mr. Messiter."

"You've forgotten me, sir," said Ted. "I'm only an odd boy, but—"

The captain extended his arm, and Ted was silent.

I'm a man," he continued, "who has broken with society, and renounced humanity. In a word, I am dead to the world, as all those who are associated with me, must be. I have my history, which, however, does not concern you. Had you not molested me, and fired at my vessel, I should not have crippled your ship, and upset your boat. The attack came from your side."

"But, sir," answered the professor, "we took your ship to be some unknown creature."

"Possibly, but this creature had done you no harm. I saw you all take refuge outside, and I hesitated a long while what to do with you. I knew nothing of you. What were you to me? Why should I extend my hospitality to you? All that was necessary to break off our connection was to give a signal to my engineers, and the *Enigma*, which is the name of my vessel, would have sunk to the bottom of the ocean. I had the right to do it."

"No," said the professor, with a smile, "allow me to contradict you; it would have been the act of a savage, and not of a civilized man."

"Sir," interrupted the captain, hotly, "I am not what you call a civilized man. Society and I have nothing in common. I do not recognize your laws, and I forbid you to speak to me again of them."

An air of anger and disdain lighted up the features of the unknown, and it was clear that his past life had been unutterably bitter.

"At last," he went on, "I took compassion upon you, and have saved your lives. You shall be well cared for, and a cabin to sleep in placed at your disposal. You may go about this ship as I and my slaves do, but I warn you not to intrude upon me without permission. There are times when I have my black hours, when it is not safe for any human being to come into my sight."

His hearers shuddered at this avowal.

"It seems to me that we are to be prisoners?" observed the professor.

"Certainly."

"But this is an outrage," exclaimed Dick. "I demand to be put on shore at the nearest port, or given up to the first ship we meet."

"You will none of you ever see the earth again, or set foot upon it," replied the captain.

"This floating prison is then our tomb—our coffin, in which we must live and die?"

"Call it what you will," replied the captain, "you have surprised the secret of my existence. Do you think I could ever allow you to revisit the world, to let it be known through every newspaper how I pass my life? There are those who think me dead. I wish them to think so, in order that some day they may have a terrible awakening."

"Death would be preferable to a life such as you propose to us," said the professor. "Am I to be cut off in the prime of life, in the midst of my scientific labors?"

He spoke indignantly, and with great animation.

"Perhaps," answered the captain, "you will not find your captivity so arduous as you seem to imagine. As a scientific man, you can study the animal life of the ocean. My library shall be open to you."

"You have a library!" cried the professor, astonished.

A smile passed over the commander's face.

"The *Enigma*, Mr. Crab, is fitted up as luxuriously as was my palace," he said.

"Your palace. Were you a king?" asked Dick, sharply.

The shade of displeasure crossed the face of the unknown again. He raised his arm threateningly, but dropped it directly.

"Ask me no questions," he said, in a harsh voice. "Those who do so will suffer for their rashness."

"Sir," said the professor, "we are poor, helpless, shipwrecked travelers, entirely in your power, and therefore at your mercy, but we have only one wish, and that is our liberty."

"It is impossible."

At these words Dick felt his heart sink within him.

"It's a crying shame, that's what I call it," said Teddy Larkin; "and the first chance I get of stepping it, my name will be Walker."

"Silence, Teddy," cried the professor, adding:

"How are we to address you, sir?"

"My name to you is Nemo."

"That in Latin means nobody," said Dick.

"You are right. Since I have quitted society, I have become nobody."

"Very well, Captain Nemo, of the *Enigma*, dead to the world," said Dick, "we must make the best of our situation, but I will never give my word that I will not attempt to escape."

"I like you, boy, for your honesty," said Captain Nemo, "though I warn you that if you are caught in the attempt, you will be instantly put to death."

"To death?" You dare not."

The captain laughed in a wild, weird manner.

"Dare not!" he said. "Foolish lad, there are no laws for me. I am the sole master here. My black slaves only live to do my bidding. What is your life or death to me? I have no more to say at present. Follow this negro into another cabin, where a repast awaits you."

He called to some one outside, and bowing politely, went away, while the four companions were conducted to a dining-room handsomely furnished and lighted by an electric lamp.

Various preparations invited their attention. The dinner service was of silver, and everything denoted immense wealth on the part of the owner.

The negro waited upon them attentively, and Dick said to him, "I suppose you may speak to us now, my black friend."

"Yes, massa, me speak now," answered the negro, with a grin.

"What is this I am eating? It tastes like meat."

"That, massa, a turtle steak. Very good meat, but all fish here. Never have no flesh—all fish."

"How do you catch it?"

"Put out nets sometimes," was the answer. "Other times, Cappen Nemo, he go out shoot, at the bottom of the sea."

Dick laughed.

"Shoot at the bottom of the sea! How does he do that?" he asked.

"That one of um secrets, massa," answered the black. "Great many secrets on board this ship. P'raps you know all some day; if Massa Nemo he tell you."

"What's your name?"

"Me name one, massa."

"One!"

"Yes, massa. There twelve slaves on board this ship, and all have figure names, me one, other nigger two, other three, four, five, six, seven, eight, and so on, up to de twelve."

"That's a rum idea," said Dick; "fancy calling out for your servant, and saying, Here nine, I want you, or, 'I say, three, do this."

"It is my opinion," exclaimed the professor, that Captain Nemo is a very remarkable man—the most remarkable, in fact, that ever lived. He has invented a singular ship which can go under the sea at will, but why not? Was not the invention of steam engines laughed at, as well as the invention of gas? Who, a hundred years ago, would have believed in the electric telegraph, by means of which we send a message to the end of the earth in a minute?"

"Very true," replied Dick. "It's a pity a man of such genius should shut himself up like this, though."

"It is a pity," answered the professor.

"What's worse, though," remarked Messiter, "is that he means to keep us as prisoners."

"If he can," said Ted.

"Don't you be so fast, Master Ted," said Dick. "Keep your mouth shut, or you may get into trouble."

"Very sorry, sir. I know I'm only an odd boy," replied Ted; "but I don't like such goings on, and wish I was back again on the beach at Brighton."

The negro handed the professor a fresh dish.

"Will massa have some American oysters stewed in whale's milk," he asked; "or some jam, made of sea anemones?"

"I'd rather you would not tell me what the dishes are; it will set me against them if you do," answered the professor, with a wry face.

When the repast was ended, Dick jumped up. "I feel better," he said.

"Stop!" cried the professor, "if we are prisoners in a submarine ship, if we are removed from civilization, let us not forget that we are Christians. Allow me, as the elder and the leader of our little party, to return thanks."

Dick sat down again.

The boys bowed their heads, and the professor said grace in a simple, reverent and touching manner.

When he had ended, he rose and said:

"Now, my lads, I am going to make a little speech. I'm not an old man, but I am older than you, and my experience goes for something, and I tell you that you never lose anything by repeating those prayers you learned at your mother's knee. We are in a position of danger; an awful position, and each night and morning you should invoke the protection of Providence. Never be ashamed of saying your prayers. Let us pray for a happy issue out of all our troubles and perils. That is all. Now let us pull our chairs together, and enjoy an after-dinner chat."

The words of the professor cheered the drooping spirits of the boys.

He was calm, brave, confident.

"Mister No. 1," said Dick.

"Massa call me?" asked the black, who was clearing away.

"Yes. Where are we now?"

"We gone down, massa, and now we lie at the bottom of the sea."

Dick regarded him with undisguised astonishment.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE MYSTERIES OF THE "ENIGMA."

THE negro entered the cabin again, bearing a decanter containing a light liquid, richly cut glasses, and some cigars on a dish.

Mr. Crab jumped up delightedly.

"Ah!" he exclaimed, "wine and tobacco. We are not so miserable, after all."

He tasted the contents of the decanter, and continued:

"This is not wine, but it is very good. How do you get it, my friend?"

"Massa cappen, um distil it from a certain seaweed, and from another sealeaf he make the cigar," replied the negro.

"A very remarkable man, indeed," observed the professor, lighting a cigar, which was rich in nicotine.

Many days elapsed.

The life of the captives was unvaried by any incident.

They saw nothing of Captain Nemo; were well attended to, slept comfortably, and had nothing to complain of but their imprisonment.

Books were freely supplied them.

They were not allowed, however, to leave their cabins.

At the expiration of a fortnight or thereabouts, as well as they could reckon, No. 1 entered their cabin after breakfast.

Addressing Dick, the negro observed:

"Massa Lighthead to come to cappen's cabin."

"Does he want me?" inquired Dick. "All right. I'm game. Good-bye, my friends," he added, "perhaps you will never see me again. I may be the first victim."

"No fear," exclaimed Messiter. "We shan't be hurt if we keep quiet."

"I'll suggest that you're the fattest, Harry, if there is any question of cooking one of us."

"Then it won't be true, for you're as fat as a mole. Go on and be cooked first! I'll have a bit of you," answered Messiter.

Dick went away laughing.

He was not really alarmed, for although he did not like Captain Nemo, he fancied he was safe as long as he did not irritate this strange being.

The negro conducted him along a passage which opened into a magnificent library, full of books, which gave admittance to a drawing-room, furnished with all the taste that could be found in Paris or London.

The space within the iron-clad shell had been made the most of, and no expense had been spared to make the cabin luxurious and well appointed.

The walls were richly papered, and covered with valuable paintings.

The ceiling was frescoed, and works of art were everywhere to be seen.

Rich couches and chairs invited rest, and the foot sank in the soft pile of a Turkey carpet.

Captain Nemo rose as Dick entered.

"Take a seat," he said, as the negro retired, closing the door after him. "I have taken an interest in you, Lighthead. Your presence soothes me. I once had a son who resembled you."

"Is he living now, sir?" asked Dick.

The black frown crossed the captain's face.

"Did I not warn you that I would have no questions asked respecting my former life?" he said. "I wish to forget it."

"Your past must have been a fearful one," said Dick, boldly, "or you never would have

quitted the world to live like this with your slaves."

"My object was to begin life anew, and forget utterly that I had ever lived before," said the captain, more mildly than Dick had expected.

"And you find that you were mistaken."

"Why?"

"Because you feel remorse, or you wouldn't be so upset at my asking a few innocent questions," said Dick.

The captain was silent for a moment.

"You are right," Captain Nemo answered at length. "It remained for a boy to teach me wisdom. I cannot forget; but at least I have quitted the scene of horror, which was dyed with the blood of—"

He paused suddenly, and bit his lip, as if he had said too much.

"Yours is a sort of madness," said Dick, with his usual coolness. "I don't believe you are quite right in your upper story, clever though you may be."

"You talk boldly," replied the captain, angrily.

"Why should I not?"

"Your life is in my hands."

"I know that; but you might as well kill me as keep me shut up here. Besides, you sent for me, and I did not begin the conversation," answered Dick.

"If any one else had dared to speak as you have spoken, I would have killed him with this hand," cried Captain Nemo, savagely.

"Perhaps I should not be the first you had disposed of."

The captain rose and came close to him.

"How do you know there is blood on my hand?" he cried.

"I don't know; I only guessed it," answered Dick. "It was a fluke; but I don't think I'm far out."

"Do not provoke me too far," said the captain. "Let us change the subject. I should not like to harm one so young. I wish you well; in fact, I have taken a fancy to you. You are a fine specimen of a brave young English boy. Come, I will explain all the mysteries of this ship to you, and show you how I have managed to escape from the world, and exist under the waves, for in no other place could I be safe from terrible enemies!"

In spite of his reserve, the captain kept on making admissions which roused Dick's curiosity.

"Your history must be a strange one, sir," he said.

"Ah! you would indeed say so, if you knew all. Perhaps some day I may tell you. Not now."

He approached the end of the room, and drawing back a curtain, revealed a splendid organ.

"Do you like music?" he asked.

"Very much," answered Dick. "Play us something. It will enliven me a bit. I feel awfully low, and I'll give you a game at dominoes or crib afterwards, if you like."

Captain Nemo smiled, and sitting down, played Mozart's Twelfth Mass with great skill.

"Thank you," said Dick, when he had finished. "Very fine. Now, will you tell me how you manage for air?"

"I will not trouble you with chemical details," answered the captain, "which you would not understand, but when I do not take in air at the surface, I have some compressed in a reservoir, which, by means of an apparatus, is wafted all over the ship."

"And about light and moving about?"

"That is the result of electricity, which I make myself. My motive power is electricity, and I can attain a speed of thirty miles an hour. The men of the world have not yet discovered half the value of electricity. My machinery is of the finest kind. If I want to sink to the bottom of the sea, I fill certain reservoirs I have with water; when I want to rise, I lighten the ship, by letting out the water. In short, I have invented every-

thing that is necessary for my safety and comfort."

"Wonderful!" ejaculated Dick.

"Your friend, the professor, would understand me, if I were to explain to him how everything is managed, but to you, it all seems as strange as the first railway train did to the country people through whose districts it passed. Engineering science is yet in its infancy. The world has great discoveries to make. You are at present only on the threshold of the great unknown."

"You work your ship with a screw, I suppose?"

"Exactly. The helmsman sits in a cabin with a glass front, and the electric light illuminates the sea for some distance, so that all is clear to him."

"Where did you build this extraordinary vessel?" continued Dick.

"On a desert island in the Pacific. I had the various parts brought in a vessel that belonged to me from various parts of the world, and the twelve negroes who are now with me were my only workmen."

"You are rich, then?"

"Money was never any object to me," replied the captain. "If I wanted gold even now could I not obtain millions from the bottom of the sea out of ships that have sunk? The treasures of the deep are mine. I am the King of the Ocean!"

He spoke proudly, and his eyes dilated with rapture.

"You like the sea?"

"I love it; I revel in it. Look at the solitude and the freedom I enjoy. What life can be comparable to mine?"

"But you must feel weary at times," said Dick.

"Never. I read, I think; and when I want diversion, I shoot."

"Where?"

"In the submarine forests I have invented a square case to strap on the back, which is attached to a mask covering the head, and this will contain enough compressed air to last for several hours' consumption, so that I can walk under the waves with ease and comfort."

"And your guns?"

"Are air guns, also my own invention. I have several, and each is prepared to fire twenty shots by a mere movement of a trigger, the requisite force of air being placed in a hollow of the butt end; but all these mysteries will become plain to you before you have been long with me," answered Captain Nemo.

"What time is it?" asked Dick.

Looking at his watch, the captain answered:

"A quarter to twelve, or nearly midday."

"If you want to give me a treat," said Dick, "I wish you would go up to the surface and let me have a look at the sea, and breathe the fresh air."

"Certainly. Come with me to the engine room."

Dick rose, and followed his conductor through several iron passages to the place where the machinery was fitted up.

It was vast and complicated.

An unpleasant odor rose from various gases, which was unavoidable.

A negro saluted the captain.

"Number twelve," exclaimed the latter. "I wish to ascend."

The engineer touched the valve, and a rush of water escaping was heard.

The pumps were forcing out the water from the reservoirs.

The *Enigma* began to ascend.

After a time she stopped suddenly.

"We have arrived," said the captain.

He led the way up a central spiral staircase, and, raising a small door, they emerged upon what may be called the deck, or what Dick had taken to be the back of the monster.

Touching a spring, an iron railing sprang up, about five feet high.

This prevented any danger of falling into the sea in rough weather, for it made a small enclosure about twenty feet by ten.

Dick saw that the shape of the ship was something like a long cigar.

The sea was calm and the sky clear; a light breeze fanned their cheeks as Dick opened his lungs to take in the inviting atmosphere.

There was, however, nothing to be seen.

Not even a passing ship or an island.

All was one vast desert.

The captain proceeded, armed with a sextant, to take the height of the sun, which would give him his latitude.

He waited some minutes until the sun attained the edge of the horizon.

Having calculated the longitude chronometrically, he said:

"We are in 137 degrees and 15 minutes west longitude, and 30 degrees 7 minutes north latitude, that is to say, at about three hundred miles from the coast of Japan."

"Then you have been traveling while we slept," said Dick.

"Certainly; we have gone several thousand miles. To-day I start again, and we shall commence a voyage of exploration under the waves."

"When you like," replied Dick; "anything for a little excitement."

The captain conducted him down stairs again, the iron railing fell, the trap-door closed overhead, and with a bow the strange being left him to join his companions.

One thing Dick remarked.

Never did Captain Nemo shake his hand or offer to take his when he stretched it out.

This was singular.

"He's done something awful in his time, I'll bet," was Dick's thought. "Wonder what it is. I'll have it out of him some day."

When he entered the cabin, Ted and Messiter crowded round him.

Even the professor evinced the liveliest interest.

"How do you like him?" asked Messiter.

"Oh, he's a stunner," said Dick. "We are great pals, and get on swimmingly."

"Really."

"I think he showed bad taste in not sending for me," said Professor Crab. "I could have talked to him scientifically, which a chit of a boy could not do."

"He knows more than you could teach him; don't you make any error, sir," answered Dick.

"What did you see?" asked Mr. Crab, hiding his annoyance.

"Saw the swell drawing-room and heard him play the organ, told me all about the electric force that moves the ship, and the electric light for the cove to steer by. Saw the engine-room; made him go up to the surface; went on deck and had a look round; took our reckoning, and, in fact, I can do what I like with him," said Dick grandly.

"Where are we?" cried the professor.

"We have been traveling, and we are now three hundred miles from Japan, and we start to-day for a long voyage under the sea."

"By Jove!" said Messiter, "they wouldn't believe us at home, if we were to tell them, would they?"

"Not much. We are going out shooting, that's another thing," exclaimed Dick.

"Shooting. Then we shall go on land, and have a chance of escaping," exclaimed Teddy, rubbing his hands gleefully.

"No, we shan't. We are going to shoot at the bottom of the sea. Shoot strange big fish and monsters."

"Beg your pardon, sir," exclaimed Teddy, with a curious expression. "I know I'm only an odd boy, but I can't stomach that."

"You needn't pull a face as long as a farthing kite," answered Dick. "It's true."

"How is it to be done, Lightheart?" asked Mr. Crawley Crab. "I am a man of science from my youth up, but I must confess I am staggered."

"Nothing staggers me on board this ship," rejoined Dick.

"But explain."

"The captain has invented air guns."

"Ah! that is possible. How about breathing, however?"

"That's another invention. He condenses air in a box strapped on the back, which communicates with a mask like a diver's helmet, and this will last some time, so we can get out and walk about rippingly."

"I shall be glad to do something. Why don't they have windows, and give us a view of the sea, and all the strange things that swim in it?" asked Messiter.

It appeared as if their conversation was overheard, for at that moment a panel in the wall slid back

A large sheet of very thick plate glass, quite transparent, was revealed to view almost immediately; a flood of electric light lit up the sea for some distance, and everything was clear as daylight.

It was as if they were looking at an immense aquarium.

"The captain is giving us a surprise," remarked the professor: "this is charming."

Innumerable fishes of various kinds, most of which were unknown, even to a naturalist of Mr. Crab's standing, passed before them.

Strange, wild, fierce-looking things, with wonderful tails and heads.

Some looking unmistakably voracious, others being long and slimy, like hideous snakes.

They were doubtless attracted by the electric light.

For two hours the four companions gazed at the ever-changing procession, without the least abatement of their delight.

"This licks the Brighton aquarium into fits," exclaimed Dick, who was the first to speak.

The light became suddenly extinguished, the sliding panel slid back into its place, and the sight was over.

"The show's closed" remarked Messiter.

"It's as good as a pantomime," observed Dick. "You couldn't have had a better bob's worth in the pit of a theater at Christmas time."

"Ah," observed the professor, "this strange man's life is not so miserable as we are inclined to think it. He is lord of the sea, and can enjoy its mysteries."

The door opened, and a negro handed the professor a letter.

He opened it, and read its contents aloud.

"Captain Nemo presents his compliments to Professor Crab, and will be glad if he and his companions will accept an invitation to shoot in the weed forests under the sea, tomorrow morning at ten o'clock."

"I'll be blowed if I go!" exclaimed Ted. "Not if I know it. I'm safe here, but I don't want to be chawed up by some strange reptile."

"Silence, Ted," said the professor.

"All right, sir," answered Ted. "I know I'm only an odd boy, but—"

"Will you shut up," said Dick; "or do you want a prop under the ear? Because you can have it if you do."

Ted was silent.

"Tell Captain Nemo," answered the professor, "that we are much obliged to him for his invitation, which we gladly accept."

The negro bowed and retired.

"We are in for an adventure now," said Messiter.

"Suppose we get lost," remarked Ted, "and can't find our way back, and the air in our cases gets exhausted, and a great big fish thing comes to chaw us up! Oh, Lord! oh, Lord! I wish I was back on the beach at Brighton."

"You're always croaking since you've been here," said Dick. "I'll have you put outside if you don't mind."

"Very sorry, sir, replied Ted. "I'm only an odd boy, but I have my feelings. It wouldn't be very nice to be lost, now, would it?"

"We must stick together. We shall have electric lamps, I expect, to light us; and, for my part, I like anything new."

"And I," said the professor, "would do anything in the cause of science. If I ever return to the world, what a wonderful book I shall be able to write."

The rest of the day was passed in various animated discussions as to the sort of game they would meet with, and the chances of their coming back alive to the ship from their marvelous excursion.

CHAPTER IX.

LOST IN THE OCEAN WILDS.

At the time appointed the professor and the boys were conducted to a cabin, which may be called the dressing-room, or arsenal, of the *Enigma*.

Hanging on the walls were numerous helmets, such as divers wear, and a number of guns reposed on hooks.

Ted had determined to accompany the party, as it was his duty to follow and attend upon his master wherever he went.

Captain Nemo was already there, and received them graciously.

"I wish you good day, professor," he said; "and you too, my boys. I think we shall enjoy some excellent sport among the sea otters and other animals worth killing. You, Mr. Crab, will be able to add to your knowledge of natural history, for we are about to traverse a forest of remarkable seaweeds and plants, in which you wil' find all kinds of submarine life."

"I am obliged for your kindness, sir, and put myself entirely at your disposal," replied the professor.

At a signal from the captain, two negroes assisted our heroes to put on their apparel, and clothed them in thick waterproof made of india-rubber, which formed trowsers and vest, the trowsers terminating in a pair of shoes with lead soles; a cuirass of leather protected the chest from the pressure of the water, and allowed the lungs full play.

Supple gloves covered the hands; the helmet was then put on, and the knapsack of compressed air adjusted on the back.

To each one was given a gun, the butt of which was of brass and hollow.

Here was stored the compressed air which discharged the electric bullets, one of which fell into its proper place just as the other had been shot away. The whole mechanism was perfect.

When all was ready they stepped into an empty cabin, the door closed behind them, and, touching a knob, the captain allowed the room to fill with water.

Then he opened a door, and they walked out into the sea.

Each had an electric lamp fastened to the waist, which made their path clear and distinct, enabling them to see every object through the glass holes in their helmets.

The captain walked in front with the professor.

Messiter and Dick were side by side, and Ted brought up the rear.

Walking was not very difficult, and the supply of air, well charged with the oxygen necessary for prolonged respiration, was all that could be wished. It entered as it was required from the knapsack reservoir, and escaped when used through a turret at the top of the circular helmet.

They proceeded along fine sand, covered with a variety of shells, for at least a mile, when they came to some rocks covered with beautiful anemones.

Innumerable fish sported round them; long, writhing eels, of a prodigious size, with ugly, flat, snake-like heads, glided away at their approach; and thousands of jelly fish danced about their heads.

They were not at a great depth, and presumably were near some island, for Dick, looking up, saw the sun overhead, guessing the depth to be about thirty or forty feet.

The sun's rays easily penetrated the waves, and made a kaleidoscope of colors inconceivably beautiful.

If the party could have spoken, they would have given vent to their admiration in no measured terms.

The least sound was transmitted easily, showing that the sea is a better conductor of noise than land.

By degrees the depth increased, and they must have been a hundred yards from the surface, as the pressure of the water increased.

Dick suffered no inconvenience, except a slight tingling in the ears and fingers.

He moved with ease, and was intensely delighted with the wonderful bed of sea flowers which gave place to the fine sand they had been traversing.

A dark mass extended itself before them; and Captain Nemo, extending his hand, indicated the beginning of the forest.

It was composed of large seaweeds and plants, which extended in a straight manner, having no drooping branches; all were erect and motionless.

When displaced by the hand, they resumed a perpendicular position.

They scarcely had any roots in the sand, and were evidently nourished by the water and not by the earth.

Some were long and slender, others short and bushy, covered with blossoms of various colors; others again reached a height equal to our forest trees.

They had not proceeded far through this dense jungle of weeds, amongst which it was difficult to pick a path, when the captain halted.

In front of him was a huge sea spider, over three feet in height, with long, terrible claws, and a scaly back like a crawfish.

It endeavored to seize the professor, who, sinking upon his knees, presented his head to it as the least vulnerable part of his body.

The captain, however, clubbed his gun, and, with one blow of the butt, broke its back and left it convulsed in its dying agonies.

As they continued to descend into a valley, bounded on each side by high rocks, the darkness increased, for the sun's rays could not penetrate more than a hundred and fifty yards.

It was now that the electric lamps became of importance.

As they got lower and lower, Dick felt an oppression about the head, and a great desire to sleep overcame him.

He lagged behind the others, and with difficulty kept up with them.

Several fine sea otters were seen in front, playing about amongst the weeds.

The captain fired, and the others followed his example.

Three fell dead, one of which Ted took up and threw over his shoulder.

Suddenly Dick sank down on the ground and immediately fell asleep.

His companions, in the eagerness of their chase after the game that had escaped, did not notice his absence.

They had proceeded fully half a mile before Messiter, looking back, was unable to discover any trace of Dick.

He at once ran to the captain, and made signs, pointing to himself, the professor and Ted, and pointing in different directions to intimate that Dick was lost.

Captain Nemo at once comprehended his meaning.

He retraced his steps, going carefully over the ground they had trodden.

It was without success.

Nowhere could they find the slightest trace of their unfortunate companion.

Messiter would have given worlds to be able to speak.

He was profoundly agitated.

It was horrible to think that Dick was lost under the sea, not knowing his way back to the *Enigma* for they had come a round-about way.

Captain Nemo was also annoyed.

If Dick chose, he could climb up the rocks, and reach the summit.

There he might take off his helmet, and breathe the free air of heaven.

But would he think of this?

Perhaps in his confusion he would wander about in the effort to meet his companions, and at last be suffocated miserably.

The supply of air with which each was provided was not sufficient to last more than five hours.

Two of those hours' supply had been already consumed.

It was necessary that Captain Nemo and those with him should think of returning to the ship.

Making a sign, he led the way back.

Messiter felt inclined to stay, and die in the attempt to find his friend.

It would have been an immense relief to him to have said something, but not a sound could he make audible outside his helmet.

With sad and weary steps, they traversed the lovely valley, which had lost all its former attractions for the party.

The forest was passed, and the sand regained.

They were not more than two miles from the *Enigma*.

Messiter determined to make a last effort.

He seized the captain's arm, and pointed pathetically, almost imploringly, to the dense mass of vegetation behind them.

His mute appeal to go back after Dick was comprehended.

But it was disregarded.

Their own lives would have been in jeopardy had they turned back.

The air in the reservoirs was becoming weak and impure.

Shaking his head in a negative manner, the captain pursued his way.

With a heavy heart, Messiter followed him, and in time the ship was reached.

They entered the water room, closed the doors, and the captain touched a bell.

Directly it sounded within the vessel, the pumps were heard at work, the water gradually lowered, and when it was all out, they opened the inner door and regained the dressing room.

It was indeed a pleasure to have the helmets removed, for they had retained them so long that they were oppressed and ill.

The captain was the first to speak.

"I am very sorry for the misfortune that has happened," he exclaimed; "you must not think me hard-hearted because I returned."

"But Dick will die," answered Messiter; "he is lost, and does not know his way back."

"His supply of air will last another hour and a half. There is yet hope."

"What can we do?"

"I will send out a party to search for him, and I will head it myself," replied Captain Nemo.

At this generous offer, Messiter's heart was filled with fresh hope.

"Will you let me come, sir?" asked Ted. "I'm only an odd boy, but my master is very dear to me."

"No; I must refuse, as you are already tired. If you were overcome with sleep, you would only be in the way."

The captain gave orders for three negroes to accompany him.

They were soon dressed and supplied with air, Captain Nemo himself taking a fresh reservoir.

Then the ceremony of going out was repeated, and as the exploring party quitted the ship, all Messiter could do was to pray fervently for its success.

He, the professor, and Ted, were very languid, and, in spite of their anxiety, they could not shake off the somnolent effects of their long walk.

Each sank down on the floor of their cabin, and was soon fast asleep.

How long they remained there, they did not know.

Messiter awoke, feeling a hand laid on his shoulder.

It was Captain Nemo.

Springing to his feet in an instant, he said:

"Have you found him? Where is Dick?"

"Unhappily," said the captain, "we could find no trace of him."

"Why did I let him go last? I ought to have had him in front of me," cried Messiter, angrily. "Poor Dick! he is lying at the bottom of the sea, and I shall never see him again. Never, never."

He covered his face with his hands, and the salt tears trickled down his fingers.

"I have dispatched another party to seek for him," exclaimed the captain; "I am too worn out to go with them this time. If they find the body we may restore him to consciousness."

"There is no hope," said Messiter, sadly; "you are the cause of his death. Why did you enclose us in the tomb, and then take one of us in the sea to die?"

"Was it my fault? You are hasty, my boy, and do me an injustice. I am as much grieved as yourself, for I had begun to love that lad," said the captain feelingly. "We will mourn for him together; there is a silent friendship in grief. We are friends, for we have the same sorrow."

In a few hours the searching party came back, weary and unsuccessful.

They could see nothing of Dick.

Everyone gave up all hope, and Dick was mourned for as one dead.

CHAPTER X.

FACING DEATH.

AFTER about an hour's sleep, Dick was aroused by an acute sensation of pain in his right leg.

Stretching out his hand, he encountered a slimy substance, and withdrew it very quickly.

Leaning on his elbow, he saw by the light of his lamp that a strange fish, with a head like a frying-pan, and a body resembling that of a codfish, was biting through his waterproof covering and trying to eat part of his leg.

In an instant he seized his gun, and, firing at its eye, wounded it grievously, causing it to splash about and retreat into a mass of weeds, where its struggles continued for some time.

For a moment Dick forgot where he was.

But as his senses came back to him, he recollects everything, and rising, looked about for his companions.

He could see nothing of them.

A horrible fear took possession of him, and he trembled from head to foot.

They had lost him in the depths of the ocean.

Without an experienced guide like Captain Nemo it was impossible for him to find his way back.

The dangerous and perhaps fatal sleep which had overcome him must be fought against.

For if it came on again he knew he must die.

How much precious air had he not consumed already?

To him, in his condition, air was life.

He knew that he had only a supply for a limited period.

The only course that remained open to him was to march as quickly as the dense mass of water would let him, and try to regain the *Enigma*.

But though he turned round, he could not find the sandy plain they had first traversed on leaving the ship.

The forest of sea-weeds, rising straight as arrows on all sides of him, erect and motionless, grew dense; animal life was everywhere.

Strange fishes glared at him, and seemed to mock his misery by the quick darting movements and sportive gambols.

He pushed his way fiercely through the

vegetable growth, but only to become more entangled.

Despair settled on his soul.

All at once the ground became hilly, and it seemed as if he had come to the end of the valley and was ascending one of the sides.

He pushed on, thinking he would give the world to be able to rise to the surface.

If he could only penetrate that thick water and float on the top of the waves, breathing the free air of Heaven, he would have gladly done so, even if he were to die an hour afterwards.

Gradually he quitted the forest, and the sun's rays began to be visible again.

Decidedly he must be getting higher.

All at once a great black mass appeared at his side.

He could see that it was a ferocious shark, whose huge mouth seemed capable of engulfing him.

Instinctively he threw himself on his back.

The voracious creature had made a dart at him, but shot past, disappointed of its prey.

If it had seized his arm or his leg, or even his head, one snap of its mouth would have been sufficient to cut off either.

As the animal swam about him, Dick pointed his gun and fired.

The shot entered its stomach, but was not mortal.

Another and another followed, and at last the vast mass floated slowly upwards.

It was dead.

Thanking Providence for this narrow escape, and congratulating himself on his presence of mind, Dick continued the ascent.

The path became steep and rugged, and it was with difficulty he made way.

He was evidently ascending the side of a rock, which became more precipitous as he went on.

Where did it lead?

Was it raised above the surface or did it fall short of it?

If so, he would have his trouble for nothing.

He breathed with an effort, and his breath grew shorter every moment, for he was making a great demand upon his reservoir of air, while undergoing strong exertion.

At length he had to stop.

It seemed as if his strength was failing him.

The sleepy feeling overtook him again, and he leant back against the shining rock, which reflected the sun's rays.

He was face to face with death.

Not much longer would his lungs be supplied with breathing air.

Suffocation threatened Dick with a painful end, yet he was so weak and prostrate that he seemed unable to make another effort.

Every moment was of priceless value.

Will nothing move him?

Is he to lie there like a senseless log and perish in the pride of his youth?

Added to the dizziness of his head was a singing in his ears.

All his past life was before him, and passed through his mind with the vividness of a panorama.

A serene expression of resignation crossed his mind as he prepared for death.

When, suddenly, he thought he saw the face and figure of his old enemy; and afterwards friend, Armond, who had died at Mr. Simecox's school at Brighton.

Armond was dressed in white, and, to Dick's fancy, had a circle of white round his head.

He was standing above him, and beckoning him to move, extending a shadowy hand.

Impelled to follow him, Dick rose.

And this phantom hand seemed to have the power of helping him over the rough places, and pulling him up the ascent.

How he did it he never knew; but he managed to climb the almost perpendicular rocks, which afforded little or no footing.

At last the sun's rays were more vivid, and,

with a feeling of wonder, Dick found himself moving with comparative ease.

This was because he had reached the summit of the rock, after climbing nearly two hundred and fifty yards.

He was out of the water.

With nervous hands he tore off his helmet, and, lying on his side, inhaled the air for a few minutes.

He looked out for his supernatural conductor, but could not see him.

Was it then a delusion?

He could not tell.

Anyhow, had it not been for his spirit guide, he would never have lived to again see the golden sun, the blue, fleecy clouds, and feel the breeze which caressed the bosom of the slumbering ocean.

"I am saved, saved!" cried Dick delightedly.

But what a fate was in store for him.

He rose at length and looked around him.

The rock on which he was standing was a narrow, barren peak, which just rose above the surface, and that was all.

The remainder of the ledge was under water.

If he had not ascended in that place he must have died.

It was singular that the guiding spirit which had saved him should be that of Armond.

Afar off was what appeared to be a small island.

But whether it was an arid desert or not he was unable to tell.

"Perhaps I shall die of hunger and thirst," he muttered; "but death is better here than in the forest under the sea."

Sleep again overcame him, and he passed several hours in a deep slumber.

With wakefulness came a horrible sensation of hunger and thirst.

While he was gazing around him, with despair again attacking him, he saw something rise in the sea a short distance off.

He thought he recognized the black back of the *Enigma*.

Nor was he mistaken.

The trap-door opened, and two men appeared on the platform.

They were Captain Nemo and Professor Crab.

Dick tried to cry out, but only a feeble sound came from his lips.

He, however, waved his hands, and the signal was seen.

Soon the *Enigma* floated gently to the rock.

He stepped on the platform, which was by this time crowded with the crew, Messiter, and Ted.

The next moment he was in the arms of kind friends.

But the reaction was too much.

He sank fainting at their feet, and was carried below, where he remained some days before he entirely recovered his strength.

Captain Nemo had entertained an idea that Dick might reach the surface by climbing up the rocks, although he scarcely dared to hold this opinion as a certainty.

But when nothing could be seen of him below the surface, he resolved to look for him above.

Consequently, the *Enigma* rose under his orders, with the happy result we have described.

Messiter's joy on recovering Dick was as intense as Ted's.

The poor boy danced and sang, and was never tired of listening to the account of his adventures.

When he was fully recovered, the negro, No. One, announced that they were going a long voyage.

"Massa say him start for um Pole," he said. "In one hour, we be off, and travel for many weeks. Trave to the Pole."

In effect, they soon heard the motion of the machinery, and the *Enigma* began her long submarine cruise.

For some weeks they saw nothing of the captain.

This mysterious man shut himself up, and sought intercourse with no one.

Every day, for some hours, the panel in their cabin slid back, and they enjoyed the treat of looking at the sea lighted by electricity.

The direction of the *Enigma* was southeast, and she kept at a depth of a hundred to a hundred and fifty feet.

It was the 13th of October, when the ship crossed the tropic of Cancer, in longitude 177°.

On the following day she sighted the Sandwich Isles, where Captain Cook was killed in the year 1779.

She had traveled about 4,860 leagues since her departure.

After that, she passed the equator, and when occasionally she remained some time stationary on the surface, and the captives were allowed to go on the platform, they beheld large and fertile islands at a little distance, volcanoes in action, and many other wonderful things.

One day, while the *Enigma* was stopping to replenish her electric power, a curious incident happened.

The electric fire was composed of elements extracted from the sea itself, which was found better than zinc, the sea containing chlorates of sodium, of magnesia, and of potash, but the sodium was the great agent.

Ted was looking out of the window, and he suddenly exclaimed:

"What is that, sir?"

Everyone went to examine, and a ship dismantled was seen slowly sinking to the bottom.

It had foundered a short time before, with all hands.

Several men were lashed to the riggings, and their agonized faces testified to their late sufferings.

A shoal of sharks followed the sinking wreck with distended eyes, anticipating a feast of human flesh.

As the hull passed the window, Dick read her name, which was the *Sir John Burgoyne*, London.

This was not an isolated case, for they frequently saw wrecks, and remains of wrecks, such as cannons, anchors, chains, and decaying hulls.

"Well, this is a lively existence," exclaimed Dick; "we eat nothing but fish, and see nothing but fish."

"And wrecks," put in Messiter.

A heavy step was heard behind them, and all turned round.

It was the captain.

He placed his hand upon a map, and exclaimed:

"Do you see this island—Vanikova? It is where the gallant French explorer, La Perouse, perished. We are close to it, and, if you please, gentlemen, you shall land, and explore it for yourselves."

This was good news.

"But," said the professor, "if I remember rightly, it is inhabited by savages."

"Certainly."

"Shall we not be in danger?"

"I fear nothing," said the captain. "I have braved danger among civilized nations, and I can afford to despise savages. If you do not wish it, however, I will continue my voyage."

"Don't do that, sir," replied Dick. "I'll chance the niggers. Let us land. I know Messiter and Ted would like it."

"And you, Mr. Professor?" said the captain.

"I, sir, will go anywhere in the interests of science," replied Mr. Crab, with a nervous tremor in his voice which showed he did not like savages.

The news raised the boys' spirits to the highest pitch.

After so long a confinement on board the

Enigma the prospect of going on land was enchanting.

No matter what danger they might encounter, they were ready.

Ted whispered that they might have a chance of escaping.

Dick said nothing.

But he was of the same opinion.

CHAPTER XI.

CAUGHT IN A TRAP.

THE party were allowed to go on shore without even promising to return, and the hearts of each beat high with the prospect of liberty before them.

Professor Crab explained that they might traverse the country of New Guinea, and so get to some port, but the journey would be perilous in the extreme.

His advice was to camp in the wood, obtain fresh provisions, and wait the course of events.

Messiter alone was in doubt.

"The captain," he remarked, "is a wonderful man, and knows perfectly well what he is about. He has told us we shall never again set our feet on civilized ground. Has he not?"

"Yes. Every one knows that," answered the professor.

"He'll keep his word, and I'll bet a new hat we are on board again to-morrow, or perhaps to-day."

"I'll take you," replied Dick. "Down with you, though how the bet is to be paid I don't know, as there are no hat shops on board the *Enigma*."

"I'd give something to find out all about our skipper," said Messiter. "He is the most curious beggar I ever met. All four of us are not a match for him."

"Speak for yourself, my young but still intelligent friend," answered the professor. "Time will show."

"We'll have some fresh meat soon," observed Ted. "I'll take my davy about that, and if you'll trust the cooking to me Master Lightheart, you shall have a dinner fit for a king in half an hour after running down the game."

"A little venison or wild boar, which is pork, would be very acceptable," answered the professor; and my knowledge of natural history enables me to tell you that we shall find both on this island which we are about to visit."

"Roast pork, lovely. It makes my mouth water," said Ted.

Do you want to have the jaw all to yourself?" asked Dick.

"No, sir; I know I'm only an odd boy," exclaimed Ted, repeating his favorite phrase, "but—"

"Chain up and go and ask when the boat will be ready to take us ashore."

Ted departed on his errand and found the boat already prepared for them.

It was made of various pieces of wood, which were easily put together when it was wanted, and taken apart when it was not required.

It would hold half-a-dozen men, and floated by the side of the *Enigma*.

Each of the four companions was provided with an electric gun, containing the usual twenty shots.

"A pleasant excursion, gentlemen," said the captain, as they emerged on the platform; "I hope you do not intend to deprive me for any length of time of the pleasures of your society."

"Wouldn't do such a thing for worlds, sir," answered Dick.

"You needn't return to-night, if you prefer camping out."

"We didn't mean to," replied Dick.

A peculiar smile crossed Captain Nemo's expressive face, as if he divined what was passing in his mind.

"Remember one thing," he said; "be very careful of your ammunition."

"Why?"

"You will find out in time. All I have to say is recollect my advice," was the answer.

They got into the boat and rowed ashore, picking their way carefully through the coral reefs, and in five minutes the bottom of the boat grated upon a sandy beach.

"Hurrah! cried Dick, throwing up his cap, "land once more!"

Ted, who was thoroughly familiar with all the tricks of boys who have been accustomed to pick up half-pence in the streets, put down his hands and did a wheel, after which he stood on his head, to give expression to his delight.

Huge forests stretched far inland, and raised their mighty heads a hundred feet from the earth.

Palms, shrubs, and creepers were mingled with the trees in grand confusion, and this scene, in the glowing sunshine, was indescribably beautiful.

The professor saw a cocoa-nut palm, and knocking off some of the fruit, gave it to the boys, who pronounced it delicious.

"Now," he said, "we will shoot something and dine as we have not dined for a long time."

"I've some salt in my pocket, and Ted has knives," remarked Messiter.

"It looks to me," said Dick, "as if were likely to have a sirloin of tiger for dinner; that forest ought to be chock full of wild beasts."

"No matter," answered Messiter, "anything's better than fish. Come on."

They skirted the forest, fearing to enter it less they might lose themselves in its dense interior.

Keeping their guns ready for instant action, they proceeded about a half a mile, when the professor held up his hand.

In front of them was a large bread-fruit tree.

Under its branches was a wild boar, engaged in eating the tender fruit which had fallen to the ground.

"Approach gently, and fire altogether," said the professor.

They did so, and four shots were discharged at the same time.

The wild boar uttered a ferocious grunt, ran a few paces, and fell down dead.

"What is it, sir?" asked Dick.

"A wild boar; do you not see his tusks? Now, Ted, set to work, and cut a leg of pork off piggy. You, Lightheart, make a fire with the dry wood; it will kindle when I rub two sticks together. You, Messiter, gather some of this fruit?

"Is it good to eat, sir?"

"You will find it excellent. I recognize it as the bread fruit of the tropics, and, cut up in slices and toasted over the fire, nothing could be better for us with our roast pork," answered the professor.

They were quickly all at work.

The fire was lighted, the leg of pork cut off, and fixed to a tripod, the bread-fruit toasted, and plates supplied by large palm leaves.

Presently a delicious odor of roast pork spread itself around.

After living so long on the peculiar fare provided by Captain Nemo, they enjoyed their dinner immensely; and, when they had satisfied their appetites, they sat down under the shade of a tree, sheltered from the noon-tide heat.

"Now, sir," said Dick, "what are we to do?"

"I have no wish to return to our floating prison," replied the professor. "The question is, shall we go back, or shall we try to make our way to some port, risking the dangers of the way, the chances of starvation?"

"That does not appear likely," answered Dick, thinking of the roast pork and the bread-fruit.

"When our guns are empty, we may not find it so easy to kill game, however abundant it may be. The savages are another danger."

"Put it to the vote, sir," said Dick.

"Certainly; all you who wish to make an effort to escape from the thraldom in which we are held, hold up your hands."

Every hand was extended.

"To the contrary?"

There was no response.

"Not a hand," said the professor, "I may, then, conclude, that we are unanimous in our wish for freedom, and it is decided that we do not return to the *Enigma*."

"Hurrah!" cried Ted, proceeding to stand on his head again.

"If you don't cut those street Arab tricks," remarked Dick, "you'll have a fit, after a bellyful such as you've got."

Ted resumed his natural position.

"There's no kid, sir, about my having had a tightener of pork," he replied. "But though I'm only an odd boy, I've got my feelings, and I'd as soon be a convict as in that there blessed ship."

"Ted is right," observed the professor, mildly; "to live and die in that ship is an awful prospect, and I would rather herd with savages in their wilds than do it."

And, as if it was intended as an answer to his speech, an arrow flew over his head.

Fortunately it missed its mark, and stuck quivering into the bark of the tree under which they were sitting.

Every one sprang to his feet, and stood, gun in hand, on the defensive.

"Niggers, by George!" exclaimed Dick.

"Where?" asked the professor.

"To the right, sir. Fire away, and chance it, or we shall all be killed."

There was an instant discharge of fire-arms, and a scuffling was heard behind some cactus and mimosa bushes.

A dozen savages, nearly naked, armed with spears and bows and arrows, were seen in a state of hesitation, whether to fly or stand their ground.

Three of their number had fallen from the discharge, and one who was mortally wounded, was crawling in a slow, labored manner into the bush to die.

"At 'em again, boys; let them have it," said the professor.

"Hot and strong this time, sir," said Ted, advancing a step to take better aim.

Again the bullets flew, and three more savages bit the dust.

The others turned to fly to the shelter of the neighboring forests.

"Hurrah! they're bolting," said Dick.

"But they've collared what was left of our bread, and the remains of the roast pork," said Ted, angrily. "Oh, the varmints! I'll just give them something."

He advanced a little more in front to fire better.

An aged chief, however, turned at this moment and discharged a parting shot, which took effect in the calf of Ted's leg.

"Oh, Lord! I'm hit," he cried. "A great wooden skewer's stuck rightin my leg, sir,"

Dick could not help laughing.

"Perhaps it's poisoned, sir. Oh, Lord! I know I'm only an odd boy; but I wish it hadn't been me. There's the professor now; he could have borne it better than me."

"Thank you, my young friend," said the professor, "the calf of my leg is as susceptible of pain as yours; let us get away, as arrow heads are sharp, and in certain parts of the body mortal."

"Where shall we go?" asked Dick.

"We are not safe here. The savages will return in larger numbers directly, and we shall probably lose our lives, so I propose we seek our boat."

"And go back to the *Enigma*?" asked Messiter.

"Yes."

"Never. I for one will not go," cried Messiter.

"And I can't crawl. I'm as lame as a dog," said Ted, half crying.

"Roll, if you can't walk," said the professor, jokingly.

"Pull it out, sir. Give me a hand with it," cried Ted. "It hurts awful."

Dick advanced to Ted, and seized the arrow head, which he tugged at until with a torrent it came out of the wound.

The boy bled a good deal, and was evidently in great pain.

It was with difficulty he managed to limp on one leg, and seemed very grateful when his young master told him to lean on his shoulder.

"My dear boy," said the professor, "discretion is the better part of valor. I am averse to the taking of human life, for I am a man of science, and not a fighter. My advice is to check the advance of those bloodthirsty savages, and when your ammunition is spent, to run. As I am old, and not quick on foot, I will start at once."

So saying, he began to run with all his speed to the boat.

"Coward!" said Dick, angrily.

"What are we to do?" asked Messiter, blankly.

"Follow him, I suppose," replied Dick. "Bring up the rear, Harry, while I help Ted along, and if the beasts show again, call us, and we will turn and fire."

They began to beat a retreat in this order, and, fortunately, the natives did not again make an appearance.

The half-mile was traversed quickly, Ted groaning dreadfully as he was forced along.

When within a few paces of the boat, the most awful yells were heard behind them.

Turning to see from whence they proceeded, Dick saw a horde of savages in pursuit.

The sands seemed to be alive with them.

Evidently the defeated party had returned to obtain reinforcements, and apprise their companions of the slaughter which had taken place, urging them to avenge it.

An army of at least three hundred wild-looking fiends was at their heels.

Not a moment was to be lost.

"Quick, for Heaven's sake," said Professor Crab; "the savages are upon us. Quick, boys, or we are lost."

The boys sprang into the boat, placing Ted in the bows, and pushed off.

Messiter and Dick plied the oars vigorously.

Fortunately, when the savages reached the beach, they were some distance out.

A flight of arrows fell close to them, without doing them any harm.

At least a hundred of the natives plunged into the sea up to the waist, but they did not attempt to swim after the boat, which soon reached the *Enigma*.

Dick expected to see some one on the platform.

It was, however, deserted.

Not a soul was to be seen.

Dick at once went to the captain, being alarmed at the hostile attitude of the savages, whom he did not doubt were possessed of cannon and would make an attack upon the ship.

He was annoyed at being obliged to take shelter so soon, but what could he do?

All his hopes of liberty in flight were nipped in the bud.

He began to see now that Captain Nemo knew the character of the coast, and had calculated well on their return to their captivity.

Imprisonment with him was better than death or slavery among the natives of Vanikova.

The captain was sitting in front of the organ playing an exquisite air of Beethoven.

Full of excitement, Dick had no time to listen.

He touched him on the shoulder.

Captain Nemo seemed unconscious of his presence.

He was absorbed in the music.

"Captain," said Dick.

The strange being shivered and turned round.

"Ah!" he cried, "'tis you, Mr. Lighthead."

Have you had good sport? You have returned sooner than I expected. Pardon me for not noticing your entry. I was playing something which was a great favorite with one who was very dear to me."

He had not, then, forgotten the world, though he had broken with and separated himself from it.

"The sport was not bad," replied Dick, "but unfortunately we met with a troop of savages, who spoilt our fun."

The captain smiled ironically.

"Savages!" he repeated. "Were you surprised at meeting with them? Have you so little geographical knowledge that you do not know they swarm hereabouts?"

"All I know is," replied Dick, "that if you don't want them on board the *Enigma*, you had better look out."

"My dear fellow," said the captain, "I am not likely to trouble my head about such wretches."

"But there are lots of them."

"How many?"

"Over three hundred, I should think, as well as I could count."

"We have nothing to fear from them, nothing at all," said the captain. "Don't be alarmed."

Without another word, he turned again to the organ, and played a Scotch air, which had an indescribable charm about it.

He was plunged again in a reverie that Dick did not think it prudent to interrupt.

Dick could do more with him than any one else, but there were times when it was advisable to let him alone.

He remounted to the platform, without seeing a single negro.

The most absolute want of precaution reigned on board the *Enigma*, and it looked as if no one knew that hundreds of howling savages were within five minutes' row of them.

In the growing darkness, which came on while Dick was alone, he could see the forms of the natives running backward and forward on the beach.

They were evidently planning an attack upon a large scale.

What could account for the captain's strange apathy?

After a time he forgot the natives in admiring the lovely night of the tropics.

The zodiacal stars appeared, and the moon shone brightly amidst innumerable constellations of the zenith.

He wished that she would light the *Enigma* to the coral bed, and that they would sink to the bottom where they would be safe from their enemies.

Proceeding at last, he sought his friends.

The door giving access to the interior of the *Enigma* remained open, and he remarked a slave standing at the bottom of the staircase as if on watch.

Teddy had his leg bound up, and, though in pain, was much better.

Strange to say, all were pleased to return to the *Enigma*, and to escape a fearful death of life-long slavery amongst the savages, who are known to travelers as Papouans.

Still Dick slept badly.

He anticipated a night attack.

It is not pleasant to think that, as the Irishman said, you may wake the next morning with your throat cut.

CHAPTER XII.

THE ATTACK OF THE SAVAGES.

GOING to his hammock, Dick slept soundly, and woke in the morning much refreshed.

It was about six o'clock when he ascended to the platform.

The morning mist had lifted, and he could see the land distinctly.

The savages were very busy, and more numerous than they had been the night before.

As well as he could calculate, he counted six or seven hundred of them."

They were tall, handsome men, with an erect bearing, their features well chiseled.

Among them were some women scantily dressed, clothed with a garment made of leaves.

The men were almost naked.

In their ears they wore rings of bone.

Their arms were arrows and bows, spears and shields, made of the skins of fish, stretched over a wooden frame or the back of the turtle.

A chief rowed in a canoe toward the *Enigma*, keeping at a safe distance.

He was adorned with a fantastic head-dress of feathers and leaves, and seemed to be the king of the country.

Having nothing better to do, Dick got a fishing line from the negro who usually attended upon him, and amused himself with catching some of the fish that swam round the ship.

No one made any preparation to repel an attack of the Papouans, which alarmed Dick very much.

He had, however, so much confidence in the sagacity of Captain Nemo that he believed he would not be caught asleep.

For two hours he continued his sport with tolerable success, and was so wrapt up in it that he forgot the natives for the time.

While he was engaged in pulling up a good bite, an arrow whizzed past him.

Dick dropped his fish and very nearly his line too.

"Bother the brutes!" he exclaimed; "can't they let a fellow fish in peace? Why doesn't the captain make a start and get away from them?"

He was as eager now to leave the land as he had been the day before to reach it.

It was clear that the Papouans were puzzled.

They had seen European ships before, but what could they make of a long cylinder of iron, without masts, almost flush with the surface of the water, and no chimney like a steamer?

But they gained confidence as they saw no attempt to drive them away.

They had seen some of their number killed by the air-guns, yet they had heard no noise.

All at once a flotilla, consisting of a score of canoes, full of savages, put off from the shore, and approached the *Enigma*.

A flight of arrows flew around Dick, who had been looking for a fresh bait for his line.

"Deuce take them!" he said. "It rains arrows. This won't do."

He sought refuge in the interior of the ship, and ran to apprise the captain of the formidable state affairs were assuming.

Clearly no orders had been given to repeat boarders.

Knocking at the captain's door, he was told to enter.

Captain Nemo was reading.

"Do I disturb you?" asked Dick politely.

"A little," replied the captain; "but I suppose you have good reason for seeking me?"

"Rather," answered Dick. "We are surrounded by savages, and in a few minutes we shall have them on board."

"Ah," said the captain, "they have got their canoes, I suppose?"

"Heaps of them."

"Then we must do something."

"Shut up the shop," said Dick.

"That is easily done," replied the captain, touching a bell, and adding, "in half a minute the trap-door will be closed. You need not be afraid that they will break in."

"No, but to-morrow we shall want air, and you must open the door again for your pumps to work."

"Yes; our ship is like a great whale, and cannot live without air."

"In a moment the Papouans will be on the top of us, and I don't suppose they will go away in a hurry," replied Dick.

"You suppose they will take possession of the outside and keep it?"

"Exactly."

"Well, then," answered the captain, calmly, "I don't see why they shouldn't. Why

should I kill the poor creatures if I can help it? I know many savages in the civilized world whom I would cut off with more pleasure. Leave them to me. If it is necessary, I will make a terrible example of them."

"You have no cannon."

"I shall not fire a shot, and I shall not wound them in anyway, and yet they will fall like leaves in autumn. Go to your friends and rest perfectly easy," said the captain.

This was a dismissal, and wondering much, Dick went away.

As he sought his cabin he heard the fierce cries of the savages, who swarmed on the back of the iron ship like flies in summer.

The night passed without any incident.

Plenty of oxygen still passed through the ship, but it was time to renew the air, which was becoming impure.

Breakfast was served in the morning as usual.

Mid-day came and the captain showed no signs of moving.

This apathy appeared incomprehensible to Dick.

Without any difficulty the vessel could have gone to sea, risen in mid ocean, and taken in fresh air.

"It is very odd we don't move," he remarked.

"I can't understand it," said the professor. "But everything is so remarkable on board this ship that I have ceased to wonder at anything."

"I've had a taste of niggers, and don't want another," said Ted, who was lying on a mattress with his leg bound up.

"Hark at the reptiles! What a thundering row they're kicking up," remarked Dick.

"I never heard such a shine," answered Messiter; "our skipper must be off his nut not to start the vipers."

The captain appeared in the doorway.

There was a pleasant smile on his face, and he did not seem at all alarmed at the menacing aspect of affairs.

"Gentlemen," he said, "we resume our voyage at twelve o'clock exactly."

"It is now a quarter to," said the professor, regarding his chronometer.

"Precisely. I shall open the flap, and take in air directly."

"And the niggers," said Dick.

"The Papouans?" replied the captain, shrugging his shoulders.

"Won't they get in?"

"How?"

"Easily enough, by walking down the ladder. They can do that when the flap is up, and can kill us all without any trouble."

"Gentlemen," said Captain Nemo, "the Papouans will not descend the staircase, although the flap is open."

They regarded this singular man in amazement.

"You do not understand me," he continued. "Come to the bottom of the ladder, and you shall see."

"Shall we take our guns?" asked the professor.

"Not the slightest necessity."

"At least your slaves are armed?"

"They are all at their work; follow me," said the captain.

They obeyed his order, and walked to the foot of the metal ladder.

The captain folded his arms, and stood by the side of the professor.

Dick and Messiter were together.

Even Ted had crawled along the passage to see what would happen.

Captain Nemo made a sign to a slave, who, touching a spring, caused a trap-door in the back of the *Enigma* to fly open.

The sunshine descended in a flood.

Terrible cries of rage and triumph were heard, and a swarm of natives appeared on all sides.

At least twenty made a rush at the ladder, brandishing their tomahawks and spears,

while they uttered fierce yells and scraps of war songs.

The first who grasped the railing, and placed his foot on the ladder, gave a bound back, and the most fearful shrieks burst from his quivering lips.

A second, a third, and a fourth did the same.

What invisible force was at work Dick did not know.

He thought the days of magic and sorcery had returned.

A score of Papouans tried to descend: but they had no sooner made the attempt than they instantly retreated, yelling dismally, and threw themselves into the sea.

"Stunning," said Dick. "It's fine, but I don't know how you do it."

The captain smiled.

To get a better view, Dick put one foot on the staircase, and one hand on the railing.

He immediately withdrew them, uttering a cry which was loud enough to wake the dead.

"Oh, oh!" he cried.

"What's up?" exclaimed Messiter, who could not help laughing.

"I twig the dodge now," said Dick; "it's a galvanic battery applied to the metal of the staircase, and whoever touches it has a shock. I've had it before at the Crystal Palace, and at fairs. You pay a penny and get electrified."

"Ah!" ejaculated the professor, upon whom a light began to dawn.

"You are right," said the captain, calmly.

"I have connected the brass staircase with a powerful galvanic battery, and the ignorant savages are frightened at they know not what. If they had persisted in their attempt to enter the ship, I should have applied all my electric force, and they would have fallen as dead as flies on a fly paper; but I did not wish to harm them. They are enemies unworthy of my hatred."

The news of the dreadful and mysterious pains which they felt were spread by the shocked natives to their friends.

Alarmed and horrified, they beat a precipitate retreat, swimming and rowing back to the shore.

In half an hour the beach was deserted, and all flew away from the sea-fiend, whose nature they could not understand.

"They take us for the devil," said Dick.

"Twelve o'clock," exclaimed the captain, who was always as punctual as fate; "I said we should sail at twelve."

At this moment the engines began to revolve, and the *Enigma* skimmed over the surface of the sea like a bird.

The air was soon taken into the reservoirs, the flap or panel was closed, and sinking, into the bosom of the waves, she glided along, moved by her powerful screw, like a big fish; only the helmsman, sitting in his solitary place of look-out, being responsible for her management.

CHAPTER XIII. THE EVIL HOUR.

SOME days passed without any occurrence of interest, and the lives of the captives passed as uneventfully as the most timid could wish.

They were ashamed of their ineffectual attempt to escape, and did not talk much about it, though the desire burned as strongly in their breasts as ever.

Professor Crab took their reckoning every day.

Perfect liberty was accorded to them, and when the *Enigma* sought the surface of the sea, lying like a blackened log upon the waves, her engines still and her crew silent, they could ascend to the platform, inhale the fresh air, and look about them.

Dick never neglected this opportunity.

It was the pleasantest thing that occurred to break the monotony of his captivity.

Towards the end of January, the professor

calculated that they were in 105 degrees longitude, and 15 degrees south latitude.

The weather was threatening, the sea rough and stormy, the wind blew half a gale, and the barometer, which had been falling for some days, announced a war of the elements.

Captain Nemo appeared to have his evil hour upon him, for he did not allow himself to be seen, and the black slaves walked about with hushed voices, attending to their several duties like animated machines.

What dreadful thoughts were passing through this strange man's mind while he kept himself secluded from every one?

Who could tell?

Dick found that the *Enigma* was stationary on the surface, and he ascended to the platform.

The captain and his second in command—a tall, wiry, intelligent negro—were both there.

They conversed in that mysterious language, to which we have before alluded, and which was incomprehensible even to the professor.

Captain Nemo was anxiously scanning the horizon with a glass.

For some minutes he rested motionless, the telescope fixed upon one particular point.

Then he lowered his glass and exchanged a few words with his subordinate,

The latter was a prey to violent emotion, which he did not take any pains to conceal.

The captain, more master of himself, remained calm and impassable.

He appeared to be raising objections, which the second attempted to put straight, but Dick could only fathom the meaning of their conversation from their gestures.

Dick looked in the direction in which the glass had been pointed, but could perceive nothing.

The sky and the water, meeting on the horizontal line, seemed to be perfectly clear.

Nevertheless, the captain walked impatiently from one extremity of the platform to the other without addressing a word to Dick, and, indeed, without appearing to see him.

His step was not so firm as usual, and he stopped several times, his arms crossed and his eyes observing the sea.

What was he looking for on this vast expanse?

The *Enigma* was certainly some hundreds of miles away from any shore.

Suddenly the captain gave an order to the engineer through his second officer, and the engineer at once went to work, impelling the ship swiftly through the waves.

Seeing that the glass was lying at the captain's feet, Dick ventured to take it up.

"I may as well have a spy," he muttered, "and see what it is."

He had not time to raise the telescope to his eye before it was rudely snatched from his hand by the captain.

Dick looked at, but scarcely recognized him.

He appeared to be strangely altered.

His eyes were burning like live coals, his forehead was bent and wrinkled, his lips, half open, revealed his clenched teeth, his head was shrunk between his shoulders, his fists closed, and a violent hatred seemed to be agitating him.

Dick was frightened.

Had he provoked this anger? No.

In a moment Captain Nemo mastered himself, and, turning to Dick, said in an imperious voice:

"Go down stairs, boy, and keep yourself and your companions in your cabin until you have my orders to leave it."

"You are master here," exclaimed Dick, "and I will go; but may I ask you a question?"

"Not one. Go at once."

Seeing that further discussion was useless, Dick sought his friends.

Four slaves followed immediately on his footsteps, and when he had regained the cabin he heard a key turned on the outside.

They were prisoners.

Dick related what had passed, and they were as much astonished as himself.

"Another confounded mystery," said Messiter. "Well, let's amuse ourselves. Who will play at dominoes? Will you, Dick?"

"No, thanks; I want to think and be quiet," was the reply.

He sat down in a corner, trying to read a book, but the lines ran into one another.

Messiter and the professor played at chess.

Dick was thinking of the captain.

In half an hour he heard the panel of the deck shut.

The engines ceased working.

The pumps emptied the water reservoirs of air, and forced in a quantity of water sufficient to cause the *Enigma* to sink, which she began to do rapidly.

Dick fancied that he heard a stifled cry before the ship lowered herself, as if some one was being dragged on board against his will.

It seemed to him as if the captain had come in contact with some vessel in mid ocean, and that an unhappy being had been the victim of his imprudence in trying to board the *Enigma*.

The cries continued for some moments.

Then he heard a piteous cry for help.

"Spare me!" cried an English voice, agonized with terror. "Are you men or demons?"

Dick's companions listened in mute terror.

"I will not die, then," exclaimed the voice in a frantic tone. "By Heaven, I will struggle for my life. Beware, I am armed. Guard yourself."

"It is you who provoked this strife."

A noise, as of a fearful contest, ensued.

Men seemed to be rushing wildly about.

Fierce cries and wild oaths were heard faintly through the closed portal.

As for Dick he threw himself against the locked door, and with strong efforts tried to open it, but without avail.

It resisted all his efforts, violent as they were.

At last a dreadful sound, as of some heavy instrument crashing through a human skull, was audible.

A deep groan followed, and all was still.

"Oh!" exclaimed Dick; "these people are murderers. Something horrible has happened."

An hour passed, and the captives conversed in whispers.

Then the door was unlocked, and Captain Nemo appeared.

His face was stern and sad.

Dick felt a repugnance towards him which he had never before noticed.

"Professor Crab," exclaimed the captain.

"Sir," answered the Professor shuddering, he scarcely knew why.

"I think, in the course of conversation, you have told me that you were originally intended for a doctor."

"I walked Guy's Hospital for two years, but my thoughts were turned into another channel, and I gave up medicine as a profession."

"Still you have a knowledge of surgery."

"Undoubtedly."

"Follow me if you please," said the captain.

They quitted the cabin together, leaving Dick, Messiter and Ted plunged in a new wonder.

CHAPTER XIV.

BURIED BENEATH THE WAVES.

In a cabin, lying upon a mattress, was a white man, whose head was enveloped in bandages stained with blood.

The professor saw at a glance that he was badly wounded.

He undid the bandages, which the man permitted without uttering a complaint, only fixing his expressive eyes upon him inquiringly.

The wound was a horrible one.

His skull was literally smashed in, and the brain protruded from the fissure; a quantity of coagulated blood had accumulated, and in his neck was a wound made by a knife.

He breathed slowly, and with apparent difficulty, and spasmodic movements of the muscles agitated his face.

The injury had produced a sort of paralysis, which deprived him of feeling and movement.

Professor Crab felt the pulse of the wounded person, which was intermittent.

The extremities of the body were already growing cold, and it was clear that death was coming on without any possibility of stopping it.

After dressing the wounds and readjusting the bandages, the professor rose.

"How did the wound happen?" asked he.

"What matters it?" replied the captain. "He brought it on himself. What do you think of his state?"

"It's very critical."

"What am I to understand by that?"

"He will be dead in two hours," replied the professor, solemnly.

"Can nothing save him?"

"Nothing!"

The wounded man's face grew paler under the electric light which bathed his bed, and he seemed to hear the words and accept his fate.

Perhaps he would be able to speak before he died; the professor lingered in the hope of hearing his last words.

But the secret of his death was to die with him as far as Mr. Crab was concerned.

"You can retire," said the captain to him.

"May I ask you to tell me how you intend to bury this unfortunate?" asked Mr. Crab.

"Certain'y. In my cemetery."

"Where is that?"

"You shall see to-morrow. I invite you to the funeral and your companions also, if they choose to come. Prepare for a journey to-morrow at ten o'clock, replied the captain.

The professor joined his friends, telling them what had passed.

Dick was horrified, and said:

"I knew they were killing somebody. Poor fellow! What a place to die in!"

"Captain Nemo recognizes no law but his own," answered the professor. "He is not answerable to any earthly tribunal, and it is not for us to say anything."

The next morning they were summoned to the dressing-room, when to their astonishment they were supplied with helmets and knapsacks of compressed air, and with electric lamp.

It was evident that the funeral was to be under the sea.

When all was ready, the party assembled in the outer chamber, the water was pumped in, the door opened, and the procession was marshaled in the following order:

Two negroes armed with guns went first.

Four followed, bearing the corpse, which was tied up in a white sheet, only the outline of the form being visible.

Next came the captain.

After him the four captives, and the rear was brought up by two more slaves also armed.

A slight declivity led to a level bottom, about fifteen fathoms from the surface,

This bottom differed altogether from that which they had explored before in the Pacific Ocean; there was no fine sand, no submarine prairies, no sea-weed forest.

It was a world of coral.

Every one knows how the hard-working little insects build up the singular mounds which, in course of ages, rise to the surface and make islands.

The vast domain of coral arose on all sides, branching out in fantastic forms, and in magnificent arcades, charming the eye with its colors and multitudinous groves.

They followed a bank in course of formation.

The vivid light of the lamps produced a thousand beautiful effects of color, and the want of design in the singular architecture increased the effect.

As they proceed the coral grew larger, and immense trees of this lovely substance seemed to stretch for yards over their heads.

The captain halted in a long gallery, and the sad procession stopped also.

On all sides the darkness was intense, except where the lamps made a brilliant light.

In front of them was a cross of coral, the upper branches having been torn off by the hand of man.

Below that was a grave, which had evidently been dug out during the night.

A sign given by the captain caused the corpse to be laid in this hole, and the soil was reverently put in and trodden down upon this inaccessible tomb in the middle of the ocean.

All were profoundly impressed.

The boys especially, and they felt the tears come to their eyes.

Extending his hand as a sign of a last adieu, Captain Nemo rested immovable for the space of a minute.

No service could be read.

Whatever prayers were said were uttered silently, under cover of their masks, and the funeral was over.

Sadly the procession wended its way back again.

In half an hour it regained the ship.

The submarine garments were removed, and the ship mounted to the surface.

No restraint being placed on his actions, Dick ascended to the platform.

The captain was there.

"You have assisted at a mournful ceremony, my lad," he exclaimed.

"Yes," said Dick, drily.

"Do you think any the worse of me for it?"

"I should not like to tell you what I think," replied Dick.

"Tell me, I shall not be angry. Did I not place the body in a peaceful spot, safe from sharks and men?"

"You did that; but you are no less a murderer. I heard the poor fellow begging for mercy, and—"

"You are wrong," interrupted the captain. "I only struck him in self-defence. You cannot be a judge of my actions. Say no more. If it were my pleasure to lay you by his side, rest assured it would be done."

So saying, he turned angrily away, and left Dick alone on the platform.

Even Dick, bold as he was, felt afraid of this terrible

man, who reigned like a King of the Sea by his wonderful inventions and advanced scientific knowledge.

Whatever his secret might be, there was a chance that some day it would be revealed.

He had hinted that he had suffered wrongs, and lived to revenge them.

The link that bound him to the world was not entirely snapped.

None of the captives had given up the hope of recovering their liberty, and Ted especially declared that he was only waiting for the first chance that offered itself.

The professor scarcely knew whether he ought to hate or admire the remarkable man who had showed him the secrets of the *Enigma*.

Was he a victim or an executioner?

Had he committed some awful crime, which compelled him to fly from human justice, or was he simply one whom cruel oppression had driven from his native land?

Though ardently longing for liberty, the professor had seen so many marvels of the deep already that he wanted to see more.

Not so the boys.

They had had enough of confinement, and panted for action once more.

CHAPTER XV.

A PEARL WORTH A FORTUNE.

A SIGN from one of the negroes warned Dick that the *Enigma* was about to continue her voyage.

He re-entered the ship, which soon afterwards sank.

The hatch was closed, and the professor, regarding his instruments, said they were going to the west.

They traversed the Indian Ocean at a depth of about a hundred yards from the surface.

The health of the captives continued good.

Ted was the only grumbler; the others read and talked, resigning themselves to their fate, and awaiting the next adventure which would befall them in their singular voyage.

"I tell you what it is, sir," exclaimed Ted, one day: "I wish I could get my bunch of fives near that there captain. If I wouldn't give him a domino, I'd let a whale come and eat me."

"What have you to grumble at, my friend?" inquired Professor Crab. "You are comfortably housed, well fed, and have a constant source of excitement in the movements of this remarkable ship."

"Bother the ship. Why didn't she strike on a rock, and bust up?" said Ted.

"Bide your time, my lad," continued the professor; "something will happen some day."

"Very prob'ble, sir, but it's waiting for it to turn up as I don't like. Just shove alongside of that blessed captain, and if I don't give him toko for yam, and all his niggers, I'll——"

"Ted," interrupted Dick, "you shut up."

"Certainly, sir. I don't have much chance of talking. I shall forget my own language soon; but no matter, I am only an odd boy, I know, and, of course, shouldn't have no feelings."

Dick took the trouble to pacify him, explaining that to provoke a quarrel with the captain would not in any way improve their position.

On the contrary, it might deprive them of the little liberties and the comforts they now enjoyed, and make their miserable condition much worse.

Ted saw this and promised to be quiet.

He was a strong lad for his age, as hard as iron, and brave as a young lion.

"Just promise me this, sir," he said.

"What?"

"If I see a good chance of stepping it, you'll be on?"

"Like a shot. But we mustn't do anything rash, you know, Ted," replied Dick. "Captain Nemo is not to be trifled with. A man who can build a ship like this, make electricity take the place of steam, and so store the air as to make it sufficient for use for twenty-four hours, is one of those great spirits who think of everything, and with whom we cannot hope to cope on equal terms."

"Don't know so much about that, sir," said Ted. "I once caught a fox asleep and gave him what for on his nut, before he could say Jack Robinson."

Dick laughed and the conversation dropped.

The voyage continued, and was not remarkable for anything more exciting than the capture of several turtles in nets, and the shooting of various sea-birds, which supplied an agreeable addition to the comforts of the table.

In the Indian Sea they encountered hundreds of the nautilus tribe floating gracefully on the surface of the water, their tiny sails spread, catching the wind, and looking like little ships.

Towards the end of February, the *Enigma*, at mid-day, came to the top of the sea in 9 deg. 4 min. North latitude.

About eight miles eastward, land was perceptible, of a mountainous character.

"Where are we now, Mr. Crab?" asked Dick.

The professor was busy looking over a map, making observations with certain instruments, of which he was allowed the use, and calculating the position to a nicety.

said Mr. Crab. "But I am well aware that our pearls come from Ceylon, and could give you all some curious particulars respecting this remarkable fishery."

"Would you like to see the banks upon which grow the oysters which contain the pearls?" asked the captain.

"Under the sea!" said Dick.

"An excursion, submarine?" said the professor.

"Precisely so. Are you inclined to go?"

"Very much indeed," replied all in chorus, with the exception of Ted.

"This is not the time of year for the pearl divers to be at work," said the captain, "though we may see one or two. I will bring the ship nearer land, and show you some of the treasures of the deep. They fish for pearls in the Gulf of Bengal, in the Indian seas, as well as those of China and Japan, off the coast of South America, and in the Gulf of Panama, and that of California, but it is at Ceylon that they find the richest harvest."

"That is a fact," said the professor: "the richest pearls, as you say, are found here."

"Right," said the captain. "We, however, shall see more than any diver ever dreams of. I shall be at your service, gentlemen, in a few hours."

When the captain had departed the professor was very grave.

Messiter and Dick were delighted at the prospect of finding pearls, but Ted bit his nails in silence.

"I'll take home a pearl or two for Henrietta," exclaimed Dick.

"If you ever get home, sir," remarked Ted, half aloud.

"You'll go with us, Ted, won't you?" asked Dick.

"I'll go wherever you go, Master Dick," replied Ted, "because it's my duty to watch over you. But I ain't going to have no sort of truck with that captain cove."

"He's all right, Ted, when you know him."

"Is he? Then I don't want to know him," answered Ted.

Turning to the professor, Dick exclaimed:

"Shall we have good sport, sir?"

"Most likely," answered Mr. Crab. "I have heard of a huge oyster which contained fifty sharks."

"Fifty sharks!" ejaculated Messiter.

"Did I say sharks? I meant pearls," said Mr. Crab, confusedly.

"Are there so many sharks about?"

"It is no use disguising the fact. The sea hereabouts swarms with them. I should not like to meet one under the waves," answered Mr. Crab, "A pearl has been called by poets a tear of the sea, and anything more lovely round a maiden's neck cannot be conceived. I have a strong wish to hunt for those tears of the sea, and behold them growing in their shells, but Heaven protect us from the sharks."

Ted disappeared for a brief space, and returned with a long harpoon.

"What have you got there?" asked Dick.

"It's a reg'lar pig-sticker, isn't it, sir?" remarked Ted, regarding it admiringly.

"It does look as if could give an ugly prod," remarked Messiter.

"They call it a harpoon; thing for sticking of whales," continued Ted. "Me and Number One, that's the nigger as waits on us, is pals, sir, and he's given me this to fight the darned sharks with."

"Brave, Ted!" exclaimed Messiter.

"It would be 'Bravo, Ted,' if I could rip up an inch or two of that captain, and seize the blessed ship," rejoined Ted, with a scowl.

Dick said nothing in reply, but waited patiently for the signal which would summon him and his companions to the captain's side.

It came an hour or two before daybreak.

A negro summoned them to the platform, near which the boat attached to the ship was riding.

It was manned by four men, and when all the party were on board the negroes began to row towards the island.

At six o'clock the day broke suddenly.

They were a few miles from the land, which was distinctly visible, with a few trees scattered here and there.

The captain stood up in the boat, and narrowly regarded the sea.

He gave a sign, and the anchor was lowered.

"Here we are," said the captain. "Put on your divers' caps, gentlemen, and follow me."

The heavy sea-garments were quickly put on.

The electric lamps were not needed, because the depth was not great.

Besides, the electric light would attract the sharks, who were creatures they could not afford to despise.

The only arm given to each of the party was a long sharp knife.

Captain Nemo set the example of springing into the sea, the others following him as soon as they were thoroughly equipped.

The negroes remained in the boat, awaiting their return.

A depth of about three yards and a half did not give them a very great submersion.

To be supplied with condensed air, to be armed, and well lighted by the sun, they walked along the bottom of the sea, easily seeing the smallest object on all sides of them.

After some little walking they came to some oyster banks, from which the shells containing the valuable pearls were dragged by the hands of the divers.

There were millions of them, and the mine seemed inexhaustible.

They could not stop to examine everything, for it was necessary to follow the captain everywhere.

The road was uneven; sometimes Dick could raise his arm and put his hand out of the water; at others he was descending a slope, and the sun's rays were not so vivid.

Everything became more obscure, and great shells were seen sticking to curiously-shaped rocks.

After a time a large grotto appeared before them, dimly lighted.

The captain entered, followed by the rest of the party, the professor eagerly taking note of everything.

Ted carrying his harpoon, which was a good deal

longer than himself, and the two boys eagerly looking for pearls, as if they expected to find them lying at their feet.

Descending an inclined plane, Captain Nemo stopped and pointed out an object which they had not hitherto perceived.

It was an oyster of gigantic size.

Lying alone upon the granite rock, it took up a large space, and never had the professor even heard of such a huge bivalve.

The shells were open a little, as if the oyster was feeding, which enabled the captain to introduce his knife.

Keeping the two shells open by both ends of his knife, he pushed back the flesh of the oyster, and revealed a pearl as big as a small cocoa-nut.

It was a jewel of inestimable price.

Evidently the captain had been to this grotto before, and knew of the existence of the wonderful oyster.

Why had he not taken the pearl?

Probably because to a man in his position wealth was of no moment; having separated himself from the world, he did not care for riches, as it is only in the world that one can spend money.

Dick advanced to the oyster, and stretched out his hand, as if he would have seized the pearl, but he was disappointed.

By a sudden movement, the captain withdrew his knife, and the two shells came together with a sharp snap.

Satisfied with showing them this treasure of the deep, he turned round and retraced his steps, leaving the pearl, which was worth at least fifty thousand pounds, behind them.

Incomprehensible man, he was now more than ever a mystery to Dick.

Again they wandered along the bottom of the sea, beholding many things worthy of observation.

Sometimes the bank was so shallow that their heads came above the water; at others they sank several yards below.

Suddenly the captain stopped, and by a movement of his hand ordered the party to conceal themselves behind a projecting rock.

He pointed to the liquid mass in front of them, and all followed with their eyes the direction indicated.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE SEA BUTCHER.

ABOUT five yards off a shadow came between the party and the rays of the sun.

Dick thought of the "Sea Butcher," as the divers of Ceylon call the shark, and trembled a little at the idea.

But he deceived himself, for this time he had nothing to fear from the monster of the ocean.

A living man, an Indian, black as ink, shot through the water, doubtless an early fisher for pearls.

The bottom of his canoe could be seen up above, a few feet beyond his head.

Arriving at the bottom, which was about five yards deep, he fell on his knees, let go the stone he had held between his feet to sink with more rapidity, and began to rake up the oysters from the bank with both hands.

A cord was round his waist, the other end being attached to his boat, and this he pulled at when he wanted to rise.

To his loins was attached a little bag, into which he put the oysters as fast as he could gather them.

Little do ladies think how difficult and dangerous it is to obtain the pretty pearls which they wear round their white necks.

The Indian did not see any one, and if he had, he would have been so alarmed at the strange spectacle of curious-looking beings walking at ease at the bottom of the sea, that he would quickly have retired.

Several times he remounted and plunged again, not getting more than a dozen oysters at each dip.

It appeared as if he risked his life for very little return, as in a score of oysters he might not find a pearl worth having.

All at once, while on his knees, he made a gesture of terror, and seized his rope to ascend to the surface.

A gigantic mass appeared close to the wretched diver.

It was a huge shark which advanced diagonally towards him, his terrible jaws open wide.

The Indian threw himself on one side and avoided the bite of the shark, but not the action of his tail.

Dick thought he heard the jaws snap, but he had not much time to think, as he saw the diver thrown down by a blow of the animal's tail, and stretched upon the ground.

All this was done in a few seconds.

The shark returned, lying upon his back, in order the better to bite and divide the Indian in halves.

Dick was about to rush forward to attempt to save the miserable wretch's life, when he was pushed rudely back by Captain Nemo.

In his hand he held a knife, and was evidently prepared to battle for his life against the shark.

The latter, just about to seize the Indian and snap him up, perceived his new adversary, and, replacing himself upon his belly, directed himself rapidly towards him.

Dick watched the captain with intense interest.

He waited coolly the attack of the shark, which was one of the largest of its species, and when it charged him, he stepped quickly aside, plunging his knife into its belly up to the hilt.

Then commenced a dreadful combat.

The shark began to bleed dreadfully, tinging the sea in such a manner as to hide the two in a sea of blood.

As the water cleared a little, Dick saw the captain, caught by one of the creature's fins, stabbing at it as fast as he could, but not being able to give it the death blow. The shark lashed the sea with fury, and almost prevented the professor and his friends from keeping their footing, though they were some distance off.

Neither the professor, Dick, nor Messiter dared to go to the help of the captain, for it seemed as if the shark would bite them in two, and they lost their presence of mind for a time.

By degrees the struggle was less fierce.

Captain Nemo was exhausted by his efforts; the shark, holding him tight in his fins, forced him to the ground.

His mouth opened like a pair of shears, and the death of the captain seemed but the work of a second.

Dick turned to Ted, who held the harpoon.

He knew Ted's dislike to the captain, but it seemed to him cowardly to let him die like this, while trying to save another's life, if anything could be done to save his.

It was impossible to speak, because of the helmet he wore, but he looked at Ted and pointed to the captain.

Their eyes met.

Dick's movements were an order to Ted; he couldn't disobey his young master, though the command was not expressed in words.

In an instant Ted precipitated himself toward the shark and struck it a terrible blow in the flank.

Again the sea was saturated with blood.

The shark agitated the water with indescribable fury, for Ted had not missed his aim.

It was the death agony of the monster.

Stricken to the heart, he struggled gallantly, but was powerless for further evil.

As the immense creature was dying, Ted pulled the captain from under him, and at the same moment the Indian, coming to himself, detached the stone from his feet, and shot upward.

Following the example of the pearl diver, the captain struck the ground with his heels, as did the others, and all were soon at the surface.

The Indian had regained his canoe, but he was lying at the bottom in a half-fainting condition.

Satisfying himself that the poor fellow would live, and was not seriously injured, the captain signaled to his companions to descend, leaving the Indian gazing at them with haggard eyes, thinking he had seen some supernatural beings.

Walking as fast as they could along the bottom of the sea, they came in time to the anchor of their boat, reascended to the surface, and taking their seats, removed their head cases, with a feeling of relief.

The negroes immediately began to row back to the *Enigma*.

Captain Nemo was the first to speak.

"Thank you, my lad," he said, extending his hand to Ted.

"It's nothing," rejoined Ted, bluntly; "you saved my life when we were wrecked, and I have now saved yours with my harpoon. We are equal now, and I owe you nothing."

A sickly smile sat on the captain's lips for a second, and that was all.

"Lay to it!" he cried to his men. "Pull to the *Enigma*."

At half-past eight in the morning, they were again on board the ship, having been absent a little more than three hours.

To Dick the captain was more difficult to understand than ever.

He had risked his own life to save that of a poor Indian whom he had never seen before, and was never likely to see again.

This showed he couldn't have a bad heart.

His heart was not entirely dead, whatever his faults might be.

As if the captain guessed Dick's thoughts, he observed to him at the bottom of the staircase on board the *Enigma*:

"That Indian belonged to an oppressed race. I also am one of the oppressed, and to my last breath I shall continue to be so. You recognize now the bond of union between us."

CHAPTER XVII.

THE TUNNEL THROUGH THE EARTH.

THE ship again continued her way, traveling toward the Persian Gulf.

If Captain Nemo wanted to visit Europe, it was clear that he would have to go round the Cape of Good Hope, but that did not appear to be his design.

He went direct to the Red Sea, and as the Isthmus of Suez was not then pierced by a canal, there was no outlet to the Mediterranean.

One morning the captain sought his prisoners, and said to the professor:

"To-morrow we shall be in the Mediterranean."

Mr. Crab looked at him with astonishment.

"Does that surprise you?" he continued with a smile.

"Certainly it does, though I thought I had given up being astonished since I have been on board of your ship."

"You are a man of science; why should you be astonished?"

"Because you must travel with the speed of lightning almost to East Africa and round the Cape of Good Hope."

"I did not say I was going to do so," replied the captain.

"You can't go overland, since there is no canal through the Isthmus of Suez—"

"But one can go under land," interrupted the captain.

"Under land," answered the professor, holding up his hand.

"Undoubtedly," said Captain Nemo, calmly. "For a long while Nature has made underneath this tongue of land what men are trying to do now on the surface."

"Does there exist a passage?"

"Yes, a passage or tunnel, which at fifty feet depth touches the solid rock."

"How did you discover it—by chance?"

"No," said the captain. "I guessed that such a tunnel existed, and I have been through it several times."

"May I inquire how you found it out?" asked Dick.

"Certainly. I need not have any secrets from people who are never likely to leave me. I had remarked in the Red Sea and the Mediterranean several fish of the same species. It was curious. I caught a few hundreds of those fish in the Red Sea, and put iron rings through their tails. Shortly afterward I fished in the Mediterranean and caught some of the ringed fish. Then I knew that they must go under land, through a passage unknown to man, as it was impossible they could round the Cape."

"You are a most remarkable man," said the professor, using his favorite phrase.

"To-night you shall go with me through my tunnel," said the captain.

"Well," said the professor, "we live to learn. Our fathers never dreamed of gas, of railways, of telegraphs, and I did not suspect the existence of your wonderful ship."

"Shortly, my dear sir," said the captain, "your children, that is to say, the next generation, will travel through the air in flying machines; your railway engines will own electricity as their motive power. There is no end to scientific discovery; the world is in its infancy. We are just emerging from barbarism. Wait and watch, that's my motto. You must not be surprised at anything in these days."

"You are right—we are on the march," said the professor.

The day passed, and at half-past nine the *Enigma* rose to the surface to receive her supply of air.

Nothing disturbed the silence but the cry of the pelican and other birds of the night, with the occasional sound of the escaping steam of a steamer traveling towards the far East.

Dick could not rest below, and at once ascended to the platform to breathe the fresh air. In the darkness he saw a pale light, discolored by the fog, which burned about a mile off.

"A lighthouse," he said.
The captain was by his side, and quietly replied:

"It is the floating lightship of Suez."

"We are near the mouth of the tunnel, I suppose? Is the entrance easy?"

"No," said Captain Nemo, "it is difficult. I always steer the ship myself, and if you like to come into the wheel-house with me I will show you the way. In a moment the *Enigma* will sink, and we shall not rise till we are in the Mediterranean."

Dick followed the captain into the pilot's cabin, which was at the bow of the vessel, the wheel working the rudder by long chains carried aft.

The cabin measured six feet square, four round windows of thick plate glass enabled the helmsman to see on all sides, and the electric light, thrown well forward, made everything as clear as day.

A strong negro, with an eye like a hawk, was at the wheel, but he gave the spokes to the captain and fell back.

"Now," exclaimed Captain Nemo, "let us search for our passage."

Electric wires communicated with the engine room, so it was easy to communicate directly with the engineers, by pressing a knob of metal.

Touching this knob, the speed of the screw lessened considerably.

For about an hour the ship passed by a bank of sand, which was varied by rocks, on which Dick saw all kinds of seaweeds, coral formations and curious fish agitating their fins in alarm at the apparition of the *Enigma*.

At a quarter-past ten a long and large gallery appeared in front, black and apparently deep.

The *Enigma* entered this gloomy tunnel boldly, and an unaccustomed rushing sound made itself heard against the sides, which arose from the waters of the Red Sea rushing into the Mediterranean.

Following the current with the speed of an arrow, the ship made its way, though the engines were reversed, and the screw went backward to abate the velocity of its progress.

A single false turn of the wheel, and the *Enigma* would have been dashed to atoms against the iron-like rocks on each side, above and below.

Dick held his breath.

He could see nothing but the foaming waters made transparent by the electric light.

At thirty-five minutes past ten the captain gave up the helm to the negro, and, turning to Dick exclaimed:

"We are in the Mediterranean."

In less than twenty minutes the ship, carried by the current, had traversed the Isthmus of Suez.

The next morning they came to the surface, and were able to breathe the fresh air again.

Ted was in high spirits when he found that they were in Europe again, because he thought they had a chance of escaping, and this idea was almost uppermost in his mind.

He spoke to his companions about it, and they all agreed to follow him, if a good opportunity offered.

The arrangement of the attempt was left to Messiter and Ted.

As for Dick, he did not think they would be successful, and the professor was too much occupied with putting down in a book all the wonderful things he saw, to bother his mind about anything else.

Being a studious man, and fond of science in all its branches, he was resigned to his lot, and if he could only have sent his notes in the shape of a yearly volume to his publisher in London, he would have been content to pass the remainder of his life on board the *Enigma*.

Ted was very busy for a day or two, and Dick saw him talking confidentially to the negro who waited upon them.

Evidently there was something in the wind.

The ship traveled leisurely along the Mediterranean, often rising in sight of land, and laying like a log upon the water.

In the evening, it was the custom of the prisoners to play at cards, or some game they liked, and after the fourth day in the Mediterranean, Ted, instead of putting the pack on the table, shut the door, and, in a mysterious way, exclaimed:

"I've squared the nigger!"

"Which?" asked Dick.

"Number one. He as waits upon us. His real name's Smunko. I've found that out. Me and he's pals. I've told him I want to bolt, and he says he shan't let on to the skipper, or any of them, though they are all a lot of spies."

"Perhaps he's one, too," observed the professor, smiling.

"Not he, sir," answered Ted. "Smunko's right enough. He's going to keep all the other coves quiet, some dark night when we're near land. Then we are to go on the platform and swim for our lives."

"A very good arrangement if it can be carried out," remarked the professor. "But I fear your friend Smunko is not to be depended upon."

Ted was indignant.

"You're Crabs by name and crabs by nature," he answered, angrily.

"Ted," cried Dick, warningly.

"Beg pardon, sir," said Ted. "I didn't mean nothing. The professor is always down on me; I'm only an odd boy, but I've got my feelings, Master Dick, and I'd rather be on the beach at Brighton than—"

"We've heard all that before," interrupted Dick; "you must take your chance with the rest of us. I did not think, when I left my school, to have a sail in the Channel, that I should in a few weeks be on board a mysterious vessel like this."

"Nor I either," observed Messiter.

"The fact is," said the professor. "I don't want to discourage the lad, but I have no wish that he should do anything rash, and involve us in a mess. The captain might doom us to solitary confinement. At present we are treated liberally, if we are prisoners."

"All right, sir," replied Ted; "I'll turn it up as far as you are concerned. If Master Dick likes to come with me, all well and good; if not, he can let it alone. I know my game, and I mean to step it."

"Don't show your nasty temper, Ted," said Dick.

"Ain't being cooped up here like a turkey in a pen, fattening for Christmas, enough to rile a bishop?" asked Ted. "But I shan't say no more. When all's ready, I'll give you one more chance, and if you ain't with me, I'm off alone."

It was impossible to check Ted's will. The only one who had any influence over him was Dick.

He was a boy rudely brought up, unaccustomed to control his passions, and having a decided character, but to Dick he was deeply attached.

The next day the *Enigma* floated near an island which the professor declared to be the Isle of Cypress.

"In the evening Ted whispered to Dick:

"Now, sir, all's ready. Smunko is piping off the other blacks; we're not a quarter of a mile from the land."

Dick's heart beat high.

"Tell the others," he said.

"No; let you and I go together."

"I can't leave Messiter, and the professor is one of us."

"Very well," replied Ted. "I spoke sharply the other night, but I'd do anything for you, and you know it, Master Dick. I'm an odd boy, but I'm all there."

Messiter and Professor Crab were apprised of Ted's preparations.

The latter, always distrustful, said:

"Is this Smunko, as you call him, to be depended upon?"

"Come on, sir, and don't fear," said Ted; "we shall lose our chance."

Without further remark all followed Ted to the staircase.

Scarcely had they set foot upon it, when the panel was rudely shut, and the ship began to sink rapidly.

Mocking laughter seemed to ring in their ears.

"Sold again," said Dick philosophically.

"Our skipper is a weasel who can't be caught asleep," remarked Messiter.

Ted was furious.

"I thought it was a mistake," observed the professor. "No matter; I'll go on with the fifteenth chapter of my book entitled 'The Submarine Kingdom, by one who has been there.'"

Turning up the corridor, Ted said, "I'll have it out of that Smunko."

Before he had gone a dozen paces, a hand was raised to stop his progress, and his eyes fell as they encountered those of Captain Nemo.

"Boy," exclaimed the latter, "when you again plan

an escape, remember that you have me to deal with. Do not try to unsettle the minds of your companions, and recollect that I have the power to punish those who offend me."

"I never said I would not try it on," replied Ted, abashed.

"You are forgiven this time. Beware how you trifl with me again. Go."

Ted, with his eyes flashing and his head hanging down in a bulldog sort of fashion, returned to his companions.

His only remark was:

"That captain cove's Old Nick himself; but I'll be one with him some of these days."

He made no reply to the jests of his companions, and bore their chaff with silent ill humor.

The voyage continued, and when they neared the Straits of Gibraltar, they observed innumerable wrecks which had gone down in this narrow passage.

There they lay, strewed about in magnificent confusion, the home of strange fishes and stranger insects.

The *Enigma* entered the Atlantic, and did not stop till she was at the bottom of the Bay of Vigo, off the Spanish coast.

In 1702, a fleet of gold vessels from the Spanish possessions in South America was surprised by the English in this bay.

To avoid their falling into the enemy's hands, the admiral in command caused the galleons to sink with all their vast treasure on board.

Captain Nemo knew that, and opening the sliding shutter which concealed the window of the prisoners' cabin, he revealed to their view the sunken vessels.

Half a dozen negroes, furnished with the divers' helmets, had left the *Enigma*, and were at work raising the chests of gold, and carrying the precious metal to the *Enigma*.

From the barrels and cases, the ingots, the piastres, and the precious stones escaped in a perfect cascade of wealth.

For hours the men worked at their gold fishery, and it was clear that the captain did not altogether despise wealth, as he was collecting so much from the bottom of the deep.

It was strange that this gold wrung by the followers of Cortez and Pizarro from the natives of Peru, and lost to the Spaniards, should be rescued from the bottom of the sea by Captain Nemo.

"What can he want with all this money?" asked the professor, aloud.

"He can't spend it," said Dick.

The captain's step was heard behind them.

For a moment he watched his men at their work, collecting the precious metal, the jewels, the richly-chased cups, and all the sunken treasures.

Then he said:

"I cannot forget that there are people who suffer on earth; that there are persecuted races who stand in need of help. It is not for myself that I amass wealth; it is for those who deserve it. The sea is my bank. I am the banker of the poor and the oppressed; they draw upon me at sight, and I pay."

So saying, he withdrew as silently as he entered.

"A most remarkable man!" ejaculated the professor, as usual.

"A jolly old humbug, that's what he is," said Ted, in a tone which made everyone laugh.

The ship began to move again, and the professor did not like the look of the compass.

"South-south-west," he said; "we are turning our backs on Europe."

When she next rose to the surface to fill her reservoirs with air, Dick mounted the staircase, and went on the platform.

No land was in view.

Nothing but the immense and illimitable sea.

Bad weather was brewing, and the few sails in sight ran before the wind close-reefed.

CHAPTER XVIII.

A STRANGE SCENE.

At two o'clock of the same day the professor calculated the position of the *Enigma* thus:

She was in 16 deg. 17 min. longitude, and 33 deg. 22 min. latitude, and 150 leagues from the nearest land.

Flight was out of the question, and the party resigned themselves to whatever fate their strange captain might have in store for them.

Dick felt rather oppressed.

He thought of his friends at home, of Henrietta, whom he loved, and wondered if he should ever see her again.

While he was thinking, the captain came up

After the usual maneuver, they set foot upon the bottom of the Atlantic, at a depth of three hundred yards.

The water was very dense, but the captain pointed out a large red spot at some distance—probably two miles off.

It looked like fire.

But how it could exist under a mass of water Dick was unable to guess.

Its light was vague, still it was sufficient for their purpose, and they advanced slowly towards it.

Captain Nemo and Dick walked side by side, gradually ascending a steep incline.

The captain had two sticks, one of which he handed to his companion, and this was very useful, as the path was slippery with seaweed and loose stones.

As they proceeded, Dick heard a hissing noise, mingled with a patter sound, and varied with a crackling like a discharge of musketry.

It was like rain falling on the top of one's hat in summer.

He slipped now and then over heaps of stones covered with zoophytes, and without the aid of his stick he would have fallen.

The light increased as they approached, and set the horizon in a flame, and Dick did not know what to think of it.

Captain Nemo advanced fearlessly, for he evidently knew the road.

At the base of the mountain the path was comparatively easy, but as they ascended, they had to traverse a forest of dead trees without leaves, black and funereal, mineralized by the action of the waves; it resembled a forest of pine trees in winter.

With difficulty they passed through this awful group of dead trees, and continued the ascent, and at last reached the top of the mountain.

The fish rose before them like birds surprised in a wood.

Gigantic crabs crawled slowly out of their way, and Titanic lobsters moved lazily on one side, and hundreds of polypi twisted their ugly limbs like writhing serpents.

Stopping on a ledge of rock, the captain signed to Dick to look down into the valley below them.

He saw a mass of picturesque ruins, heaps of stones, and magnificent columns, amongst which were splendid temples and beautiful villas, clothed with sea flowers, which served them as a winding-sheet.

The mountain did not rise above eight hundred feet beyond the plain, but they had not yet reached the top.

Captain Nemo urged him on, and when he got to the summit a grand sight met his view.

The mountain was a volcano.

Fifty feet below them, a huge crater discharged a mass of flame and stones, accompanied with torrents of lava, all of which fell back into the bosom of the sea.

The lava, red hot as it was, caused the brilliant light before the water cooled it.

Dick saw before him a splendid city destroyed by volcanic agency.

The architecture was of the Tuscan order.

He saw an acropolis, an aqueduct, the remains of a quay where mighty ships might have lain, deserted streets, in fact, a Pompeii under the sea.

For an hour they remained watching the submerged city under the action of the volcanic flames.

Then they slowly retraced their way to the ship.

Having arrived and taken off his helmet, Dick seized the captain's hand, and asked :

"What have I seen?"

"The remains of one of the greatest cities of olden times," replied Captain Nemo,

"Tell me something about it."

"Tell your friend, Professor Crab, that you have been to the ruins of Meropis, the Meropis of Pliny and Tertullian; he will explain it to you," replied the captain.

Dick was obliged to be satisfied with the answer, and he sought the professor, to whom he related the wonders he had seen.

"My dear boy," said the professor, "I am ready to admit that the whole of this region, now covered with water, was one day land, and not so very long ago. Meropis stood on this continent, as we have evidence to prove. It was the oldest and grandest of the Greek cities. The people were great and powerful, but suddenly it disappeared, and the sea flowed over this large and great country—a day and night were sufficient for its destruction; and now, the islands of Madeira, the Azores, and the Canaries, with the Cape de Verd, are its highest peaks above the sea."

"The world is more wonderful than I imagined," replied Dick, thoughtfully.

"Perhaps our little England will be swallowed up some day," said Messiter.

Suddenly there was a noise in the passage outside the cabin.

Dick rushed out, and saw Ted beating a negro.

It was Smunko.

"You sold me," cried Ted, angrily; "what do you mean by it, you black beast? I'll give you something."

"No, Massa Ted, me not sell," replied the black, struggling gallantly with the bear-like hug in which he was held.

"I'll have your wool," continued Ted, twining his fingers in his short, crisp hair, and kicking his shins, which are the most tender part of a negro.

"Oh, him kick um legs; help, Massa Nemo! help!" cried Smunko.

The captain appeared on the scene, and struck Ted on the side of the head.

Letting the negro go, Ted, blinded with passion, drew a knife, and rushed upon the captain.

So sudden and unexpected was the assault, that the latter was unable to avoid it.

He was stabbed in two places before his cries brought his men to his assistance.

Dick saw with horror and dismay that blood was trickling down upon the iron floor of the passage.

Ted was held in a vice-like grip by four men, and glared savagely around him.

"Disarm him," said the captain, in a faint voice, "and confine him and his companions to their cabin."

Instantly all four were hustled into the cabin, and the iron door closed upon them, without their being able to ascertain the nature or gravity of the captain's wounds.

The professor was greatly agitated.

Messiter and Dick looked blankly at one another.

"Good Heavens! what have you done, wretched boy?" said Professor Crab.

"I couldn't help it," replied Ted. "The negro, instead of helping me to escape, went and told the captain, and I meant to have it out of him the first chance."

"You might have expected it; why should he prove false to his employer?"

"If the captain had not interfered, I should not have hit him."

"You have all the making of a murderer in you, my lad," continued the professor, "and I fear that you will get us into some serious trouble."

"I wish I had killed him; we might have got away then. What right has he to keep us here?"

"The right of the strong to oppress the weak, which we cannot dispute," replied Professor Crab, "and as by saving our lives in the first instance, we surprised his secret, he has some sort of right to keep us here."

"Are you all against me?" asked Ted, looking appealingly to Dick.

"I can't defend the use of the knife. It is cowardly," said Dick.

"He struck me first, and a thundering hard prop it was."

"No matter; you were wrong."

"I expect," said Messiter, "we shall all get it, for this; the captain's a hot member when his back's up."

"I don't care what becomes of me," answered Ted sullenly. "I'd as soon croak and turn up my toes at once as be kept here. You think, all of you, because I'm an odd boy, I ain't got no feelings."

"We think nothing of the sort," replied Dick; "but we hold that it is cowardly to stab."

"And more than that, it is an abuse of hospitality to attack with a knife one who, like Captain Nemo, has treated us with as much kindness and consideration as lay in his power while we have been on board his ship."

"All right," answered Ted, "pitch in. I'm here to be shot at."

The remainder of the evening passed very gloomily.

Smunko brought their meals, but did not speak a word, and would not even answer when appealed to as to the condition of the captain, about whom all were anxious except Ted.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE SENTENCE.

A WEEK elapsed and the prisoners were closely confined.

The freedom that had hitherto been accorded them, was wholly withdrawn, and one and all ascribed the harshness with which they were treated to the rashness with which Ted acted.

Ted himself seemed sorry for what he had done.

Privately, he owned as much to Dick, saying that it was the impulse of the moment, and he did not think that the others would suffer for his deed.

"I have done it," he said, in a tone of contrition, "and I suppose I must suffer for it."

"You should have restrained your passions," replied Dick; "everything on board this ship should be done on the extreme Q. T. We are watched."

"You mean quiet, I suppose, sir, by Q. T.," answered Ted. "I'll be quiet enough in future, though this life is enough to drive an average chap like me silly."

The professor was able to continue his calculations by the aid of compasses and maps, with other scientific instruments.

He discovered to his surprise that the vessel was traveling with great swiftness to the south, following the fiftieth meridian.

On the 14th of March he perceived floating masses of ice on the surface of the ocean, when the *Enigma* stopped, and by means of the window in the cabin he was able to peer into the sea.

Could it be the captain's intention to go to the Pole itself?

Was he dead, owing to the wounds given him by Ted, and were the men he left behind him unable to navigate the ship?

These and other questions received a prompt answer one morning.

Smunko came into the cabin and ordered the prisoners to follow him.

He was respectful in his manner, but there was not that freedom which they had hitherto remarked.

They were conducted into Captain Nemo's drawing-room, as his splendidly-furnished cabin may aptly be termed.

He was lying on a sofa, and a bandage could be seen round his right arm and another round his left breast.

His face was pale, and wore a more than usually severe expression.

On each side of him was a double row of slaves, each armed with a ship's cutlass.

The whole force of the ship, with one exception, was present.

"Gentlemen," said Captain Nemo, with his accustomed good breeding, "I have sent for you to inform you that you have been tried by me during my week of suffering."

"I hope, sir," said the professor, anxiously, "that you do not think we ordered this unfortunate lad to act as he did."

"No," exclaimed the captain, "I do not. I acquit you of any complicity in his design, but at the same time I have found you all guilty."

"Of what?"

"Of an attempt to murder."

"But, my dear sir—"

"Listen to me," cried Captain Nemo, waving his hand as he interrupted the professor; "you are each in

my eyes responsible for the acts of one another. I have received two wounds from one of your number, either of which might have been fatal. Thank Heaven I have escaped from the knife of a cowardly assassin!"

"Think of his youth, sir," urged the professor.

"I have thought of everything," exclaimed Captain Nemo, "and it only remains for me to pass sentence upon all of you."

"What have I done?" asked Dick, flushing.

"I can make no distinction between you. I condemn you all four to death."

At these words all turned pale.

The professor trembled violently.

Messiter sought Dick's hand and grasped it warmly, as if he thought all was over and wished to take a long farewell.

Ted, however, was the most agitated of all.

He knelt before the captain, and said, with tears in his eyes:

"I don't beg for mercy for myself, sir, but for my young master and the other two. They are perfectly innocent. It was all my doing."

"You should have thought of the peril in which you involved your associates before you acted with such transparent folly and such great wickedness," answered the captain.

"Let them off and do what you like with me," pleaded Ted. "For the love of Heaven, sir, don't be hard on Master Dick."

"Silence!" cried the captain. "Remove him."

Two stalwart negroes seized Ted and dragged him back to the place where the others were standing.

"The sentence of death which I have passed upon you," continued Captain Nemo, "will not be executed for twelve months."

At this declaration the hearts of the condemned beat again.

While there is life there is hope.

"On the 1st of March, next year, you will die, but the manner of your death I shall keep a profound secret. It will be painful, as befits your crime. For twelve months you may brood over your doom, which I trust will increase the punishment."

"I hope you will reconsider your sentence, sir," said the professor.

"When my mind is fixed, I never alter; do not delude yourself with the expectation that I shall pardon you," exclaimed the captain. "You have twelve months to live—that is all. During the remainder of your lives I shall accord you the liberty you have hitherto enjoyed, with the exception of the platform without special permission."

The professor bowed, and leading the way, he and his companions withdrew.

Captain Nemo's utterances were those of fate!

It was useless to struggle against them.

There was no hope, except in flight, and that they would be more jealously guarded than ever, they did not doubt.

Owing to Ted's rashness, their condition was gloomy in the extreme, though they were thankful that they were not immediately put to death.

So many things might happen in twelve months.

But if nothing happened, what then?

It was DEATH!

CHAPTER XX.

IN THE CLAWS OF DEATH.

CAPTAIN NEMO did not seek the society of the captives as he had formerly done.

Keeping himself aloof from them, he led a solitary life, but when he met either of them in the passages of the ship, or on the platform, he spoke with civility, though not with friendship.

They, on their part, regarded him with awe, as their future executioner.

Ted was very sad.

He would have given worlds to have recalled the past, but it was too late, and though those he had condemned to death fully forgave him, he could not hide his misery.

Frequently, while talking to himself, Dick heard him say:

"I'm only an odd boy, but I'll get them all out of it yet, somehow."

This was a difficult task, however, and Dick scarcely dared to hope.

The captain's wounds were not dangerous, and he was soon able to walk about, and take the control of the ship as usual.

"Because the ice will block us in."

"You forget that the *Enigma* can go under the ice," observed Professor Crab, adjusting his spectacles to look better at a map he was studying.

The icebergs grew more numerous, and it was difficult to steer between them.

They frequently met with an awful crash, agitating the sea for a great distance, and the water appeared to be slowly freezing all round.

On the seventeenth a field of ice absolutely barred the way, but the captain sent his ship forward with all its force and split a way through like a battering ram.

The cold was intense.

With five degrees below the zero, the *Enigma* was coated with ice, and the snow fell in heavy masses, while the wind blew from every point of the compass in turn with a wild, melancholy howling.

Nothing but a sailless, mastless ship, warmed and worked by electric power, like the *Enigma*, could possibly have lived in such latitudes and such weather.

At last, even the great force of the *Enigma* was unable to force a way for them.

It was not a bank, a field, or a berg of ice, which barred her path, but a succession of mountains in front of her, glistening like frosted glass.

"Longitude, 51 deg. 30 min. south; latitude, 67 deg. 39 min..." said the professor, looking up from his books, as the vessel became motionless.

"It's a case now," observed Dick.

Ascending to the platform with Massiter, he beheld a vast plain of ice twisted into all sorts of fantastic shapes.

Here were confused blocks, piled one on another.

There was a mass of waves, tormented by the winds, frozen into small hillocks, and beyond, strange bergs, looking like mountains; and all around reigned a sullen silence, which struck a chill to the soul itself.

For the first time since Ted's unfortunate attempt at assassination, the captain came up to Dick and spoke to him.

"What do you think of the situation, my boy," he asked.

"It looks as if we were fixed," replied Dick.

"How? Did you ever see the *Enigma* in a mess she could not get out of?"

"But at present we can neither advance nor retreat; we are stuck fast."

An ironical smile sat on Captain Nemo's thin, aristocratic lips.

"You think we must stay here and hunt the seal, the bear, and the walrus, till the ice breaks and lets us out," he said.

"The season is so advanced that we have no chance," replied Dick.

"I am of a different opinion; and I have the honor to inform you that we are going a great deal further yet."

"Further South?"

"Yes, to the Pole itself."

At this audacious announcement Dick thought the captain was mad, though it gave him an indescribable sensation of pleasure to think that he would have a hand in accomplishing what Frobisher, Franklin, and other Arctic explorers had failed to attain.

"To the Antarctic Pole," continued the captain, calmly. "You know that I can make the *Enigma* do what I like. This is my first voyage in these seas, and we will discover the Pole together; being the first to tread on that land which has never, since the creation of the world, been sullied by a human foot."

"How do you mean to do that?" asked Dick, incredulously.

"By going underneath this bank of ice. My ship will swim through the water, as the ice only extends to a certain depth. If a continent arises at the Pole we shall be stopped and forced to turn back; but if, as I and other men who have studied the question, believe, an open sea, full of life and vegetation, is to be found, we shall succeed."

"It is a dangerous enterprise," said Dick.

"At all events we are going to make the attempt," replied the captain.

No time was lost in making preparations.

The powerful pumps of the *Enigma* filled the reservoirs with compressed air.

At four o'clock the platform was deserted and the panels closed.

The weather was clear, but very cold, being twelve degrees below zero.

An hour later, a dozen men, armed with picks and axes, went outside the ship to cut away the ice and release the vessel from its embrace.

This being accomplished, she rapidly sank, attaining a depth of eight hundred yards, which prevented the possibility of her striking against the base of an iceberg.

The professor was enchanted with the new trip, which was the most daring Captain Nemo had yet taken.

Sitting before his maps and instruments, he said:

"We have to go from 67 deg. 30 min. to 90 deg., which makes twenty-two degrees and a half of latitude."

"How many miles is that, sir?" asked Messiter.

"Over fifteen hundred miles; but we are traveling now at a speed of twenty-six miles an hour, the engines working at high pressure. Therefore, in forty hours, we shall reach the Pole."

"It is a grand idea," said Dick.

"Perhaps, said Ted, "we shall get bunged up in the ice, and then, with no air, what will become of us?"

"Always grumbling, Ted," said Dick; "you're like the boy who would spell Constantinople with a 'k,' and was never satisfied because he got licked in consequence."

"I'm licked now, sir. This ship, Master Dick, is the greatest lick I ever had. Who'd have thought I should have come to hate the sea?" rejoined Ted.

Dick began to whistle "There's a good time coming, boys," and went into the library to read a book, in order to while away an hour or two.

Several times while thus engaged he heard the *Enigma* strike the roof of ice over his head with her sharp bows, as if trying to force a passage upwards.

In this attempt she continually failed.

The ice was too thick, and she had to continue her way.

At length he fell asleep on a divan in a dark corner of the cabin.

How long he slept he did not know. It might have been some hours. When he awoke he heard voices.

Evidently his presence was not suspected.

The captain was sitting down, talking to a tall, well-made negro, who was the second in command.

Searcely daring to breathe, Dick listened.

Perhaps the merest chance would enable him to hear the secret of the captain's mysterious life.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE CAPTAIN'S SECRET.

As Captain Nemo spoke, it was observable that a soft melancholy had usurped the harshness which was usually perceived in his voice.

"How many years, Pedro, have we now been afloat?" he asked.

"Five, massa," said the negro.

"Five years ago. One year we were building this ship. That makes six. It is then six years since I last saw my loved Adele."

"Do you still think of Missy Adele, massa?" asked Pedro.

"Can a man who has once loved as I have loved, ever forget?" said the captain. "I remember when I was the richest and most powerful planter of the Southern States of America."

Dick listened intently.

The captain, by his own confession, was an American, and had been a planter in the States.

"Then came the civil war. I fought with Jackson and Hood until his capitulation after the fall of Richmond. I returned to a ruined home to find that my wife, my darling Adele, was gone."

"But you were rich, massa."

"What was wealth to me? My money, fortunately, was invested in English securities, and Harold Dugard could defy the world. Who would recognize Harold in the excentric Captain Nemo?"

"We were faithful to you," said Pedro.

"Yes; out of three thousand slaves but twelve remained faithful," returned the captain.

"I heard that my wife, while I was fighting against the Yankees, had eloped with my friend, Crawley Vipond, who had purchased a vessel of war, in which he intended to sail about the world for the rest of his life."

"He 'fraid you, massa."

"Ha, ha!" laughed Captain Nemo, bitterly. "He's afraid of me because he knew me but too well. As he had done me the greatest wrong one man can do another, he felt that his life would not be safe on earth."

"We shall find him yet," said Pedro.

"Five years have I scoured the seas for his ship, which is called the *Belle of New Orleans* as if to mock me, for my wife was the most beautiful girl in that city. I built this vessel to make sure of my revenge. Some day we shall meet, and then—"

He clenched his fists, and his teeth grated together fiercely.

All that there was demoniac in him came to his face at that moment.

His evil hour was on him.

Dick shuddered.

He had bared the secret of the captain's life.

Before the American civil war he had been a rich and prosperous planter in the Southern States.

As Harold Dugard, he was the happy husband of the fair Adele.

While he was fighting the battles of his country, his false friend, Crawley Vipond, had seduced the affections of his wife and taken her away.

Afraid of the vengeance of the outraged husband, the guilty pair found no rest for their feet on the earth.

They were not safe anywhere, for Harold Dugard was a man who could never forgive an injury.

So they bought a war vessel, and, manning it, sailed from sea to sea, thinking themselves safe.

They heard that Harold Dugard had disappeared, no one knew whither.

Perhaps he was dead.

That they could not believe, for, knowing his vindictive and determined character as they did, they guessed that he was hiding himself to inflict some terrible blow upon them.

Little did they think, though, that the wonderful *Enigma* was gliding after them like a sea snake above and below the surface of the sea.

Only waiting to find the *Belle of New Orleans*, in order that she might strike her amidships, and send all on board to the bottom as speedily as if she had struck upon a sunken reef.

Woe to Crawley Vipond when he met Harold Dugard in mid-ocean!

Vainly would he shriek for mercy and pray for help!

A cruel and sudden death would be the portion of all on board.

Dick now clearly understood the design of Captain Nemo in quitting the world and shutting himself up in the *Enigma* with his twelve faithful negroes.

"Our task must come to an end soon," continued the captain.

"Find the *Belle of New Orleans* before long, massa," answered Pedro, hopefully.

"And then you shall have your freedom and the land I have promised all of you," said the captain.

"Massa very good. Massa come and live, too, with Pedro?"

"No, my lad," answered Captain Nemo; "I shall be a wanderer on the face of the earth. When I have accomplished my vengeance I shall go from one city to another, staying nowhere long. Life lost its charm for me when my false friend robbed me of my wife Adele."

Dick felt for this strange man.

His lot was a hard one.

The war had ruined his home, and the treachery of his friend had broken up his domestic happiness.

Dick was afraid to move.

He had learnt the terrible secret of the captain, and he dreaded if he was seen that he might be put to death at once.

So he remained as quiet as a mouse.

Suddenly the melting mood of the chivalrous Harold Dugard, alias Captain Nemo, changed.

"The air is getting close," he said. "It is time we reached this open Polar Sea."

"If it exists, massa," replied Pedro.

"I am sure it exists. Are the engines worked at their highest pressure?"

"Yes, massa."

The captain looked uneasily at his watch.

"We are four hours already behind my calculations. Let some air out of the reservoirs, and try again if you can break the ice. Stay, I will come with you, my faithful Pedro."

To Dick's inexpressible relief, they both quitted the library together.

He crept silently away, and rejoined his companions, to whom he did not say a word of what had taken place.

It would be dangerous, he thought, to give utterance to such a secret as he had discovered.

The captives snatched a little sleep.

But the professor was unable to rest, and at three o'clock he rose to consult his instruments.

He calculated that only a hundred and fifty feet separated them from the surface of the water.

The *Enigma* continued to rise in a sliding oblique manner, which showed that the thickness of the huge bank of ice overhead was lessening.

Messiter woke next, and looked at Dick, who was tossing restlessly in his bed.

"Woe to Crawley Vipond," he muttered; "woe, woe, if Harold Dugard in his *Enigma* meets the *Belle of New Orleans*!"

"What's he talking about, I wonder?" said Messiter.

"Ah! Adele, how could you leave such a manly heart and such great love?" continued Dick in his feverish sleep. "You are beautiful, but you deserve to die with your paramour, and you will die, or I am mistaken in Captain Nemo."

He awoke with a start.

"Hilloa, Harry," he exclaimed, rubbing his eyes.

"You've had a bad dream, haven't you?" inquired Messiter.

"Beastly. Did I say anything?"

"Yes. You've been talking to yourself like old boots."

"About what?"

"Crawley something, and *Belles of New Orleans*, and Dugards, and death, and I don't know what all."

"Ah, yes," said Dick, collecting himself; "I'm going to write a novel, to pass away the time here, and they are some of my characters."

"Bosh!" replied Messiter; "over the left."

"I am, really."

"What's the caper? There is something up, I know. Won't it tell its own Harry?" asked Messiter, coaxingly.

Dick was doubtful how to reply.

Suddenly the door opened.

It was six o'clock in the morning of that memorable nineteenth of March.

Captain Nemo appeared, looking radiant.

"I have the honor to announce, gentlemen," he exclaimed, "that we have reached the open sea."

DICK LIGHTHEART AT SEA,

"Bravo, sir," said Dick, "we represent the two greatest nations of the earth."

"Some day," Captain Nemo went on, "When Arctic discoveries make greater strides, this land will become well known. It is one of the grand secrets of the future."

Professor Crab at once pronounced the land to be of volcanic origin, though no crater in activity could be seen.

Vegetation was very sparse.

A few lichens grew upon the black rocks, there were no trees, or shrubs, and the prospect was not inviting.

But if the land was barren, the air and the sea swarmed with life; the former was filled with birds, who flew in eddying circles over the heads of the party, and the sea was the home of innumerable whales, seal and walrus.

To the great delight of the captain and the professor, the sun rose a little before midday, for without its appearance they could have made no observations.

In a day or two's time, that is to say, on the twenty-first of March, the day of the equinox, the sun would have disappeared for six months; these regions having half a year of day and the same quantity of night.

Employing his chronometer, the captain found that at midday the sun's disc was evenly cut by the horizon of the north.

"I am satisfied," he said calmly; we are really at the South Pole."

The professor was profoundly agitated at this brilliant scientific discovery, and remained silent for some minutes.

The sun slowly sank and the atmosphere became overclouded.

"Adieu," said the captain, extending his hand to the dying sun, "sleep in the bosom of this open sea and leave a night of six months to extend its shadows over our new land."

Soon the snow began to fall heavily, and the wind whirled the graceful flakes in every direction.

The party regained the ship and were glad to get below, where an excellent dinner of various kinds of wild fowl, recently killed, awaited them.

Winter had commenced.

On the following day the cold became intense, and the thermometer fell twelve degrees.

A thin ice began to form, the birds and the whales sought a warmer climate, only the seals and the walrus remained to brave the long period of coming cold.

The *Enigma* replenished her supply of air and sank slowly to a depth of a thousand feet, when her screw beat the waves and she advanced straight to the north at the utmost speed of which she was capable.

Towards evening she was making her way under the immense mass of ice which lay directly over her.

The professor was lost in admiration at the captain's daring.

Dick thought of the many wonders he had seen.

Ted and Messiter played at draughts; it did not matter much where they went to, and they took everything as it came, like philosophers.

Towards eleven o'clock in the morning Dick was awakened by a violent shock.

The furniture in the cabin was overthrown.

It was clear that the *Enigma* had violently struck against something.

The professor was thrown out of his bed.

Ted and Messiter were quickly on their feet.

All looked anxiously at one another, and turned pale.

At this moment Captain Nemo entered the cabin, and for the first time since they had known him, they remarked that he was profoundly agitated.

"What has happened, sir?" inquired the professor.

"We have struck against an iceberg which has been traveling under the ice," replied the captain.

"Is our passage barred?"

"Unfortunately, yes. It is useless to attempt to return; our only chance lies in going on, but as our way lies through a comparatively small space, this iceberg prevents our doing so."

"We are hopelessly blocked, then?" said Professor Crab, with a voice of resignation.

"Yes."

Overhead was an impenetrable barrier of ice, and, unless the berg could be cut through in its thinnest part, their position was indeed deplorable.

"I knew how it would be," exclaimed Ted; "those mad tricks of going to Poles, where no one has ever been before, are sure to turn out wrong. Besides, what luck could we expect in a ship like this 'ere which is more like the devil's boat than—"

"Ted," said Dick, "will you hold your row?"

"Certainly, sir. I'm only an odd boy, I know that, but I have my feelings," replied Ted, using his favorite phrase.

The captain spoke again.

"Gentlemen," he said, in a more calm and collected tone, "there are two ways of dying in the condition in which we are."

He resembled at that moment a professor of mathematics who was explaining a problem to his pupils.

"The first," he continued, "is to die crushed to pieces by the ice which is floating this way; the second is to be suffocated. I do not speak of death by hunger, because our provisions will last longer than we; so we will occupy ourselves with the chances of crushing or stifling."

"As for suffocation for want of air," said the professor, "we have nothing to fear at present, as our reservoirs are full."

"You are right," answered Captain Nemo; "but they contain only two days' supply of air. We have been thirty-six hours already under water, and even now the heavy atmosphere of the *Enigma* requires renewing; in forty-eight hours more our reserve will be exhausted."

"Very well, sir," said Dick; "we must get out of it somehow in forty-eight hours."

"We will try, anyhow, to pierce the wall that stops us."

"Whereabouts?" asked the professor.

"I must make an observation, and will strike at the thinnest part; though we have not much choice. I will strike the berg near the top, and my men, in their divers' dresses, will cut away at the ice with picks and axes."

"You will not refuse our poor help?" said Dick.

"Certainly not," was the reply.

"As for me," exclaimed Ted, "I shan't work. If we've got to die in twelve months, we had better die at once. For my part, I'd as soon be dead as on board this ship."

The captain shot an angry glance at Ted.

"Gentlemen," he said, "I expect the services of you three, and in return for your prompt kindness I revoke the sentence of death I passed upon you; but as for this ill-conditioned fellow, I shall so far alter his doom, as to hasten it by six months, in which time I shall put him to death."

Perhaps you won't have the chance, governor," said Ted, boldly.

The captain waved his hand impatiently.

"Ted, said Dick, "you are my servant. I order you to join in the work without another word."

"I'll do anything for you, Master Dick," replied Ted; "but this captain cove is always on me like a grub; and, though I'm only an odd boy, I have my feelings."

"Give us your orders, captain," said the professor, briskly. "We will do anything we can for our common safety."

Captain Nemo conducted them to the dressing room, and all, even himself, put on the divers' attire.

Each had his air knapsack; but lamps were unnecessary, as the luminous masses of ice were saturated with electric rays.

A short while afterward the party stepped into the outer room.

The water was let in, the door opened, and they emerged upon a bank of ice.

After a brief calculation, a spot was selected to commence operations upon; and it was thought that the thickness of the ice to be cut through did not exceed ten yards.

This was a formidable task.

A tunnel had to be made, sufficiently large for the *Enigma* to float through. When this was done, they would have a long distance to travel before they could reach the open sea, and take in a fresh supply of air.

At such a time moments were worth ages.

The work was commenced and carried on with wonderful energy.

All felt they were working for their lives except Ted.

Yet he did his utmost for Dick's sake.

Captain Nemo had pardoned the others, and this made them work harder than they otherwise would have done.

With his pick, the captain marked out the dimensions of the huge ditch which had to be made.

And as many men as could work at it at once set to.

Soon huge blocks were detached, and floated away in sullen majesty.

Dick and Messiter were in the first gang; and after working for two hours like Trojans, they retired exhausted.

Immediately their place was filled by others.

The water was singularly cold.

But the exercise kept the circulation of the blood in a proper state.

When the two friends re-entered the *Enigma* to take some refreshment, they found a striking difference between the air of the ship, already charged with carbonic acid gas, and that which they had been breathing in their helmets.

For forty-eight hours the air had not been renewed, and its vivifying qualities were considerably weakened.

Time went on; and in twelve hours the crew had only succeeded in cutting away about one yard of the ice wall.

If the work was to go on at that rate, it would require five nights and four days to get through.

"Five nights and four days," said the professor, as he joined the others, "and we have only two day's air in the reservoirs."

"Without counting," replied Dick, "that when we have cut through the berg, we have a long way to go before we can get up to the surface, for the ice-field over our head must extend a great distance."

Horrible reflection!

It seemed as if work was useless, and that nothing could save them from a death by suffocation.

Were they destined to perish in this ice tomb? It seemed like it.

But each bravely concealed his fears, and resolved to do his duty.

In the morning came a fresh danger.

The professor remarked that the cold was more intense.

The thermometer fell, and as the ditch extended, and the water flowed into it, it was seen to freeze, and it threatened to undo the work that had been accomplished.

The men ran the risk of being frozen in as they worked.

He re-entered the ship, and at once communicated his fears to the captain.

"I knew it hours ago," replied the captain, who was always calm, even in the most terrible situations.

"What can be done?" asked Professor Crab.

"Nothing, I fear; we must push on the work, and try to get out before the process of solidification is complete, that is all."

During the day every one continued to work, though the herculean task seemed hopeless.

To Dick it was a relief to put on the helmet and breathe the fresh air supplied to the knapsack from the reservoir, as the condition of the ship became more and more insupportable.

Towards the evening another yard had been cut in the ice wall.

The captain opened the reservoirs and shot some fresh air through the ship.

Unless this precaution had been taken, those who slept would never have awakened more.

On the morning of the 27th of March, Dick and his companions began at the fifth yard; but as the walls on each side were chipped away, they began to thicken as the water froze.

What was the use of excavating?

It seemed as if they were between the jaws of a monster, which was slowly closing upon them.

The most ingenious savage could not have invented a more awful death.

Professor Crab saw that the ice came nearer and nearer to the *Enigma*, as the water froze.

He touched the captain on the arm, and pointed this out to him.

Captain Nemo made him a sign to follow him, and they re-entered the ship together.

When their helmets were removed, the latter said:

"We must do something heroic, Mr. Crab, or we shall be sealed up in the ice which creeps upon us hour by hour."

"I can think of nothing," said the professor.

"I fear the ship is not strong enough to bear the pressure when the ice closes all around us."

"If it were strong enough, what then?"

"My dear sir," returned the captain, "don't you see, that if we hold out we might be saved, and the only means that occurs to me is to stop the solidification."

"How?"

"We must heat the water, and by lessening the temperature, we shall keep the passage we are cutting open, and also prevent ourselves from being crushed up like a match-box."

"How long have we to breathe?" asked the professor.

"To-morrow night the air reservoirs will be empty."

This was an utterance of fate.

The professor trembled in every limb, and a cold sweat broke out all over his body.

CHAPTER XXIII.

A NARROW ESCAPE.

The professor was unable to continue the conversation for a brief space.

The precious supply of air was failing them.

Those who were at work were compelled to consume a large quantity, and all would be exhausted shortly.

"Yes," said the captain, breaking the oppressive silence; "nothing but boiling water can help us in this extremity."

"I am of your opinion," replied the professor. "The pumps of the *Enigma* can send out a constant supply of hot water; this will check the freezing process."

"I will try it," said Captain Nemo.

The thermometer outside marked seven degrees below the freezing point, and the cold increased as the vast berg naturally cooled the water around it.

In the kitchen of the ship there was a vast apparatus for creating water by evaporation and making it fit to drink.

These were filled with water, and all the electric heat of the galvanic piles was put in action to heat the liquid, which in a few minutes attained a warmth of a hundred degrees.

As fast as the water became hot it was pumped into the sea, and a fresh supply taken in, so that a constant stream of boiling water was sent out.

In three hours after this work commenced the thermometer marked six degrees, and two hours later it was only four.

"We are saved from the chance of being crushed," said the captain, calmly.

"Yes," replied the professor. "But we may yet be stifled."

During that night the water was only one degree below zero, and as sea-water can only freeze at two degrees, they had effected all they wanted.

On the morning of the 27th of March six yards had been cut through the wall of ice.

Four only remained to be pierced.

This involved forty-eight hours' work.

During this time it was impossible to replenish the air of the *Enigma*, so that everything went from bad to worse.

An intolerable heaviness affected Dick, and towards the afternoon his head ached violently, he breathed with difficulty, and his teeth chattered.

"God bless you, old boy," exclaimed Messiter, who was suffering quite as badly.

Towards the middle of the night a sort of vertigo seized them, and they felt like drunken men.

Some of the negroes who formed the crew fainted.

The captain alone preserved his coolness and his energy.

In the morning he found that including himself, only five men were fit for work.

The professor was unable to move, and lay on his back, like a fish out of water, gasping and coughing.

These five men were joined by Dick, who, ill as he was, put on his diver's dress and shouldered the pick.

"I won't be licked," he exclaimed, with that braveness which distinguishes all our British boys. "If I am to die, I will die in harness."

He staggered rather than walked to the ice.

The men worked in a listless manner, as if they had scarcely any strength left in their trembling bodies.

It appeared that the end was drawing near with fearful rapidity.

Captain Nemo watched the tottering forms at their work. He reflected, and while he thought he acted.

"Another night would set us free," he exclaimed, "but we have not the time. I must act boldly."

He called the men at work into the vessel by a sign, and at his order the *Enigma* was placed at the entrance of the narrow shaft which had been dug out of the berg.

About a yard of ice, or perhaps a little more, now separated her from the sea on the other side.

The water reservoirs were opened, and a hundred cubic yards of water taken in to increase the weight of the *Enigma*, just as she was about to sink a great depth.

This was done to make her as heavy as possible.

Dick, lying on the bed, listened intently to all the noises that struck his ears, and heard with astonishment the screw of the ship in motion.

First of all, she backed a little.

Then she was thrown with immense force against the remaining yard of ice which was at the end of the tunnel they had, with so much toil, cut through the impeding berg.

A terrible shock resulted.

The ice cracked like so much paper, making a singular noise, just as paper does when it is torn.

She began to sink down rapidly.

Ted was on his knees at Dick's side, and putting up his hand to his ear, whispered through his fevered lips:

"We are through. We are through the ice!"

Dick was unable to reply.

He seized Ted's hand and pressed it in a convulsive grasp.

Ted was right.

The vessel had forced her way through, and she fell through the water like a bullet dropped into the sea, owing to her unusual weight.

Her captain left the helmsman's cabin, when he saw that his maneuver was carried through satisfactorily, and went to the engine-room.

The pumps were at once set to work to pump out the water.

In a short time the descent was stopped, and she ascended until the captain thought he had gained the proper position, when he put the screw to work again, and traveled through the water with all the speed he could put on her.

How long would this last? was the question every one asked himself.

When would the open sea be reached?

In a few hours several would be dead.

Dick's face was violet, his lips blue, and his faculties suspended.

All he could do was to listen to the screw, which made pleasant music in his ringing ears, although he could scarcely see or hear.

His companions were in the same wretched state.

What was passing on board the ship none of them knew, and they were too weak and ill to go and see.

The notion of time disappeared.

They were more dead than alive.

This agony continued for some hours.

They thought they were going to die, and in reality it was only a question of time.

Near the professor's bed was an instrument which marked the speed of the vessel, and casting his eye in that direction, he saw faintly that the hand indicated the fearful speed of forty miles an hour.

They were traveling like an express on the broad gauge of the Great Western!

Certainly their gallant captain was making a grand struggle for life.

What a man he was!

Nothing could conquer him!

He persevered to the last, when none but one or two faithful slaves remained at their posts.

Again the sinking professor looked at instruments which the kindness of the captain had placed in his cabin.

This time he sought one which marked the rising or falling of the vessel.

A simple calculation showed him that they were only twenty-five feet from the surface of the sea.

This was no very great thickness of ice.

Could it not be broken.

Perhaps.

At all events, the attempt should be made, and he felt the ship assume an oblique position as if it was intended she should strike upwards, which was easily done by the introduction of sufficient water into the chambers prepared for that purpose to disturb her equilibrium.

Then she dashed at the ice-field like a formidable ram.

Again and again the attempt was repeated, and at last, carried upward by a supreme effort, she flew up to the slippery surface, which broke under her weight.

The panels were hastily broken open, and a flood of air rushed into every part of the vessel.

They were saved!

Ted was stouter and stronger than Dick Lightheart, and had been accustomed to a rough life.

He held out longer than his young master, and when

he saw the latter sinking, he went into the room where the cases of air were kept, and taking one half used, applied it to Dick's lips.

This kept him alive, and when the panels were opened he, with Messiter's aid, helped him on the platform, which was crowded by the crew of the ship.

The captain and the professor alone did not appear.

Wonderfully refreshing was the air of heaven to the poor captives who had been so long without it, and in a very short time they recovered themselves.

"Ted, dear boy," said Dick, "you have a claim upon me now; I shan't forget you."

"Your life was worth more than mine, sir," answered Ted, "and so I did all I could to preserve it; though I never expected we should get out of that mess."

"We are out of it, thank goodness," exclaimed Dick.

"I expect that captain cove will get us into another before long," said Ted; "it's my opinion, Master Dick, that he isn't quite right in his head."

"He's a rum one, anyhow," remarked Messiter.

"A born rum un, Master Harry," exclaimed Ted. "I've seen a few off their chumps at Brighton, along of drink and that, but they wouldn't live as he does. Not much. He's going to kill me—let him, if he can. My name's Walker, I tell you, as soon as I get half a chance, and it isn't long odds I don't jump into the sea and have a swim for it soon."

"Don't do anything rash, Ted," said Dick; "the captain has pardoned us, and perhaps I can induce him to let you off, though you deserve punishment for stabbing him him."

"Well, sir," said Ted, "I'm only an odd boy, but I have my feelings, and it does knock me silly to hear you take the part of that captain cove, who is off his nut as sure as eggs is eggs."

Dick made no answer.

He inhaled the fresh air, breathing new life every moment, and stopped on the platform until the hatch was battened, and the ship again went on her marvelous way.

On, on, she went, round Cape Horn and to the mouth of the Amazon River; and still on, on, as if the captain was burning with feverish impatience to overtake something of which he was in chase.

Dick knew very well what this fearful chase was.

But he didn't dare to say a word to any one about the discovery that he had made.

The captain wanted to find the *Belle of New Orleans*, which contained the betrayer of his wife, the infamous Crawley Vipond, who had carried off his darling Adele.

The captain did not show himself at all to his captives.

He shut himself up, and was seldom encountered in the passages or on the platform.

All his orders were given to Pedro in his cabin.

About the end of the first week in April they crossed the line, and when near the mouth of the Amazon, the ship rested for two days on the water.

About ten days passed there.

Then on the 1st of May she briskly took the northern direction, floating with that extraordinary current which is called the Gulf Stream.

Messiter came to Dick in the morning and said gravely, "Something's going to happen, old boy."

"Why?" asked Dick.

"Ted says so, but you shall hear what his reasons are. Come here, Ted."

The boy approached.

"What's up, Ted?" inquired Dick, anxiously.

"We're going to leave the ship, sir," answered Ted.

"How do you know?"

"You'll laugh at me," said Ted, "if I tell you, but I'll chance that, Master Dick. Look here. This is how it is. When mother died I had a dream. When father went down at sea in the storm I had the same dream. Before we were upset and picked up by the ship, it was the same thing the night before."

"You mean to say, if you dream of a certain thing, you will be sure to have a violent change in your position," said Messiter.

"Just so, sir; I'm only an odd boy, but this is gospel truth."

"What did you dream of?"

"White snakes," replied Ted, in a half whisper. "Last night they came to me awful bad, just like a lot of those nasty polypusses things. They swarmed over me all night long, and I knew something would happen when I dreamt of white snakes."

"Well," said Dick, "I shan't be sorry for a change. Shall you, Harry?"

"Not I," replied Messiter; "I only hope Ted's strange dream can be relied upon."

The ship was lying on the surface to renew her supply of air, and while the boys were talking the distant sound of a cannon was heard.

"What's that?" cried Dick, springing up.

"Sounds like a shot," exclaimed Messiter.

"Come to the platform. Quick," cried Dick.

Ted slowly followed his young master, rubbing his hands with glee.

"I knew something was bound to happen," he muttered; "I never dream of white snakes for nothing. We shall have a barney on board soon, and I'm not sorry for it. That captain cove is too much for me. If I am only an odd boy, I've got my feelings."

With his favorite phrase on his lips, he made his way to the platform, whither Dick and Harry had already preceded him.

CHAPTER XXIV.

A STRANGE SAIL.

"WHAT is it, sir?" asked Ted, eagerly.

"A cannon shot," exclaimed Dick, "and there is another. Look at the puff of smoke coming from that big ship over there. Duck, my lads, it's getting hot."

The report was now heard, and a ball ploughed up the sea at some little distance.

A large ship was steaming down upon them, and discharging shots at intervals at her, though it was extremely doubtful whether the people on board knew what they were firing at.

"She may fire away and sink us, for what I care," said Ted.

"What nation is she?" asked Messiter.

"I fancy I can see the stars and stripes flying," answered Dick. "If so, she is a Yankee."

The strange sail continued to advance rapidly, and as she carried big guns, it was dangerous to allow the strange vessel to remain on the water to be shot at.

"Where's the captain?" asked Dick.

"Below in his cabin. Can't you hear his organ going? He always pretends not to care when anything is going to happen," replied Messiter.

"Do you think he knows?"

"What is there an old fox like that does not know?" said Messiter, laughing.

"Tell you what," exclaimed Ted, "we shall have a chance soon, sir; I don't dream of white snakes for nothing."

"How do you mean, Ted?" asked Dick.

"Why, if the ship comes nearer, we can throw ourselves into the sea, and swim to her."

"Not a bad idea," exclaimed Dick, thoughtfully.

There was nothing impossible in jumping into the sea and keeping afloat until picked up by the boats of the strange ship.

"Go below and bring up a glass," said Dick, after a pause.

Ted did so, and Dick turned the telescope towards the vessel, at whose peak a small flag was flying.

On it he read this name:

The Belle of New Orleans.

After what he had learnt of the captain's history, this came like a revelation upon him.

The strange ship was the one which the captain had been looking for during five long years.

On board her was his enemy, Crawley Vipond, who had stolen from him his loved wife, Adele.

The guilty pair were far from thinking that in attacking what seemed to them a strange monster, they were drawing near to their relentless foe.

"Something terrible will happen in an hour or two," exclaimed Dick, lowering the glass.

"You think so, sir?" asked Ted.

"I can't tell what is written in the book of fate," answered Dick, "but I'll take odds you will see something presently."

After a time Dick descended with Messiter, who asked him a variety of questions, but Dick was not in the humor to talk.

"Another time, Harry," he answered, "I will tell you all."

He was strangely excited, for he felt a horrible tragedy was contemplated.

There could not be less than fifty souls on board the strange ship, and all were doomed.

The panel was shut, but the *Enigma* remained on the surface as if she had nothing to fear.

Night came.

A perfect silence reigned on board.

Dick heard the measured beat of the screw as it struck the waves with rapid regularity.

He could not sleep, for he thought it was to be a night of horror.

"They're all in the engine-room doing up the machinery," he continued.

"Well, what then?" asked Dick.

"You know the iron boat they've got, which takes to pieces and puts together?"

"Yes."

"I've been and sneaked it bit by bit," continued Ted, in a tone of triumph.

"You have?" said Dick, admiringly.

"Yes, and I put it together stunning, I have."

"Bravo, Ted; you're a genius," exclaimed Messiter.

"I don't know what it is, sir; but if I am only an odd boy, I have my feelings, and can't stand that captain cove, not at any price, and not by any manner of means," answered Ted.

"If I understand rightly," said the professor "you mean to tell us that you have a boat on the platform ready for us to escape in."

Ted nodded his head violently.

"All being occupied with the disaster which had befallen the machinery, you think we can mount to the platform and get away unobserved?"

"Blessed if you don't talk like a book, girl," said Ted.

"How about grub?" asked Messiter.

"That we must chance," said Ted.

"We are not near any land," said Dick.

"Some ship may pick us up," said Ted; "at any rate, I mean to risk it, and I'm off in five minutes by myself if none of you ain't got the pluck to join me."

"I'll come," said Dick, decidedly.

"And I," said Messiter.

"Well, if you are all bent on going," remarked the professor, "I suppose I must accompany you. Just let me put my scientific notes in my pocket, and I shall be ready. Who leads the way?"

"I'm first," replied Ted; "Master Dick and Master Messiter next, and you can come up last, sir, like the old owl asked out to the birds' party."

"What did he do, Ted?" asked the professor, with a smile.

"I haven't time to tell you the story, now, sir; but you are the born himage of that there howl," answered Ted, grinning.

"Suppose the captain or any of his men should twig the little game," suggested Dick.

Ted's countenance became grave at once.

Putting his hand inside his belt, he drew out his knife, and held it up, letting it flash dangerously in the electric light which burned in the cabin.

"It's sink or swim with me this time," he said in a half whisper, "and I don't mean to be licked if I can help it. See this."

"Put it away. Some one might come in," said Messiter, nervously.

Ted replaced the knife.

"I mean to stick some one if I get half a chance," said Ted, with a grin, "and if that captain cove interferes with me, I shall be on to him like grub, and no flies. I'm only an odd boy, but—"

"Don't talk so much," interrupted Dick. "You go on like an eight-day clock when you're wound up."

"All right, sir, I'm off. Don't funk, Mr. Crab."

"What does he mean by funk?" asked the professor, in a puzzled manner. "Is it a nautical term?"

"No, sir," replied Dick, "he means don't get frightened."

"I am a little nervous, but you can rely upon me at a pinch," replied the professor.

"The coves are all in the engine-room," Ted went on. "I've been piping them off."

"What does he say?" asked the professor.

"I've been a-foxing of them, sir."

"What is that? I relly am at a loss to understand your meaning. Your conversation is such a peculiar and perplexing mixture of slang and English, regardless of grammar, that—"

"Never mind what he says, sir," interrupted Dick, impatiently. "If we are going to make this bolt, we mustn't waste time."

"I am silent. Lead on," answered the professor.

"I'd give something," said Messiter, "to be playing 'shell out' at some billiard-room in Brighton."

"You're a rat," replied Dick; "I like excitement. This just suits me. I feel as if I could back the field—that's ourselves—against the favorite—that's the captain—though he's no favorite of mine."

"And take long odds, I should think," answered Messiter.

"Ted's off. Now for business," replied Dick.

Every face wore an anxious expression, and in spite of Dick's banter, his heart was beating more quickly than he cared to admit, even to himself.

The captain was not a man to be trifled with.

He was, moreover, as powerful and absolute on board his strange craft as a sultan in the East is over his despotically ruled subjects.

His deadliest enemy had been in sight of him only a short time before, and he had hoped to send him to the bottom with all his crew and with the false woman who had betrayed her husband.

At the very moment when revenge appeared within his grasp the cup was dashed from his lips.

A dense fog had arisen on the surface of the ocean, fading for a time every object from view.

To add to the calamity, the complicated machinery of the vessel had just broken down.

This necessitated a long delay.

No wonder the captain fumed and fretted, and that his whole mind was bent upon repairing the machinery as soon as possible.

When he had killed the man who had ruined his happiness forever he would have attained the object of his life.

It was hard to be frustrated when his prey was within sight.

He bestowed no thought upon his captives.

If he was thus remiss, there was one who did not forget the prisoners.

This man was Pedro.

Pedro, the right hand of the captain, a man who,

though a negro, was at once sagacious, faithful, and bold as a lion.

Hearing footsteps continually passing up and down the staircase in the center of the vessel, his suspicions were aroused.

He went up to the platform, and looked about him.

The mist was so dense that for a moment he could see nothing.

Presently a spectral form passed him, and seemed to glide over the side of the ship, which was, as we know, from her peculiar construction, almost flush with the water.

Peering into the fog, he saw the outline of a boat.

In this boat was a human being.

Without any hesitation he let himself fall into it, and found himself by Ted's side.

"What is this?" he asked.

Ted gave one glance at the swarthy skin of the negro, and his determination was taken. It was his life or Pedro's.

Perhaps the lives of his companions would also this time pay for the rashness of his daring scheme.

His hand sought his belt, and without a word he drew his knife and plunged it up to the hilt in the negro's body.

The blow was so well aimed that Pedro's heart was pierced, and he expired without a groan.

His body fell across the thwarts and lay motionless as a log.

The next instant Dick and Messiter let themselves down into the boat.

A sickening smell, such as is always sent up from recently-spilt human blood, assailed their nostrils.

Dick's foot slipped in a pool of the ruby fluid.

"Are you hurt, Ted?" were his first words.

"No, sir," was the reply.

"What has happened?"

"Only a nigger dead, sir," answered Ted. "I'm very sorry, but I was obliged to do it. Give us a hand to clear the boat. Let him drop gently. That's it. So—Lower away."

Pedro's body was allowed to fall into the sea.

Dick asked no more questions.

He could easily guess now what had taken place.

Though he shuddered at the idea of taking life, he felt it was necessary, and with a sigh he awaited the coming of the professor.

Minutes elapsed, and he did not make his appearance.

"What's that old daddy long-legs?" said Ted, in the same low tone in which all their conversation was carried on.

"Can't imagine," replied Dick.

"Hadn't you best go and look after him, Ted?" said Messiter.

"Not if I know it, sir," replied Ted. "none of us three must go on board that ship again, unless we want to enter our graves."

"Is it safe to stop here?"

"Not long; but I don't like to leave a pal."

The boys scarcely knew how to act.

To stay where they were was undoubtedly dangerous, for their absence might be at any moment discovered.

Professor Crab had for so long a period been their kind and instructive companion in captivity, that they were extremely reluctant to desert him.

Still they could not wait for him any great length of time.

To do so would have been madness.

He knew perfectly well what their intention was, and had agreed to join them in their bold attempt.

When Dick and Messiter quitted the cabin, he had said he would follow them almost directly.

Something must have happened.

Wearily passed the moments, which seemed ages.

Messiter sat in the stern, waiting to shove off.

Dick and Ted had each grasped an oar, and were prepared to pull vigorously through the water at the first signal of alarm.

So passed five minutes.

CHAPTER XXV.

PICKED UP.

THE boys could hear their hearts beat. No sound broke the stillness of the night, save the mournful plashing of the waves against the iron side of the ship.

At length their anxiety became so intense that they could bear it no longer.

"I must go and see what has become of the professor," muttered Dick.

"You shan't," replied Messiter.

"Why not?"

"If you do, you will get collared. We've got a good chance of escaping, and we must be flats if we lose it."

"But," said Dick, "it isn't manly to desert a companion."

"Under the circumstances," answered Messiter, "we are justified in looking after ourselves."

"I shan't be a minute," cried Dick; "let me go. I can take care of myself, Harry."

"I'm blowed if you shall go," replied Messiter.

As he spoke, he shoved off the boat with a vigorous push, and just at that moment the professor tumbled into the boat with a groan, lying still as if suffering pain.

"Pull away, Ted. It's all right; Mr. Crab is in," he continued.

"Gently, Master Harry, don't kick up no more row than you can help," replied Ted.

The boat glided swiftly into the mist, and the gloomy form of the iron ship began to fade away from their sight.

When they had gone some distance, Messiter, who had been speaking to the professor, said:

"Mr. Crab has hurt himself in falling, but he hopes it is not much."

They pulled on steadily for about a mile.

Then Dick stopped.

"Let me take a pull," said Messiter, "you must be pretty well blown."

"No, it isn't that. I'm good for a five mile spin now," answered Dick. "But I don't think it advisable to go any further at present."

"You're captain now, Master Dick," said Ted. "Isn't that right, Master Harry?"

"Quite right; Dick's head is worth both ours put together."

"Thank you for the compliment," replied Dick, smiling, "though I think we must admit we owe our escape to Ted, and when we come across our grog again we'll drink his health with musical honors."

"That would puzzle us now, unless we did it in salt water," said Messiter.

"If I am to be captain, you must listen to me, and obey orders," exclaimed Dick.

"Certainly," replied both in a breath.

"My plan is to stay here till the mist lifts, because the captain cannot follow us until his machinery is repaired. Do you see?"

"Yes. What next?"

"I think we stand a chance of being picked up by that big ship we have been pursuing. She can't be far off, and we were close to her when the fog came on."

"Lucky for her, wasn't it?" said Messiter.

"Rather. I think the captain meant to force the ship at full speed right through her, just as a conical shot would go through a wooden vessel."

"Why?"

"I can't tell you the whole story now," answered Dick, "but I know enough of our strange skipper's history to say that the man of all others he hates most is the captain of that ship."

"I see."

"Therefore, if we are picked up by her, we must not say we have ever seen Harold Dugard."

"Who?" asked Messiter, in surprise.

"Harold Dugard. That's the captain's real name."

"Do you know anything?" asked Messiter.

"If we do say anything about him, Crawley Vipond will probably kill us."

"Who is Crawley Vipond?"

"The captain of the big ship called the *Belle of New Orleans*, and Harold Dugard's enemy."

"Why his enemy?"

"Because he stole his wife, Adele, and keeps her now on board that vessel," replied Dick.

"What shall we do and say?" inquired Messiter.

"Oh! cook up some lie or other, in self-defense. Let me see, we sailed from Honduras in the mahogany ship, *Emma of Hartlepool* and all hands were lost except us three. Can you think of that?"

"I'll try

"Daybreak for a hundred," observed Messiter.

"Light ahead, sir," cried Ted.

"Where away?"

"On the larboard bow," answered Ted.

"Pull now, my lads," said Dick, joyfully. "It can't be the electric light of the *Enigma*, because we know she is on our right. It must be the *Belle of New Orleans*. Stick to it, Ted; put some strength into it; we have no time to lose, or the *Belle of New Orleans* will be off again as soon as she can see her way to get her steam up."

The boys bent over their oars, and the little boat flew over the waves in the direction of a bright red light which appeared from its position to be hoisted half-mast high.

In a short time the breeze, aided by the rising sun, dissipated the mist.

Dick looked around him.

About a mile and a half off lay the black carcass of the strange ship, more resembling a dead whale than anything else.

A mile off on the other side was the vessel that the captain had been pursuing so relentlessly.

The smoke was already rising from the funnels as the fires were lighted preparatory to making a start.

"Hoist your handkerchief on the end of an oar, Harry," exclaimed Dick.

"All right," replied Messiter, doing as he was told.

"Wave it, because I want to attract the attention of those on board the ship."

"There is some one on the platform of the *Enigma*," answered Messiter, whose eye was as sharp as a hawk's.

"That's the captain—I'll bet he's mad," said Ted.

"Never mind him. Our only chance of safety lies in getting on board the *Belle of New Orleans*. Pull away," replied Dick.

They pulled in silence until they were within a short distance of the ship.

The beat of the engines now made itself heard.

She was in the act of starting.

"Give her a hail," said Messiter; she'll be off."

"Ahoy there! Ship ahoy, ahoy, ahoy!" cried Dick, as loud as he could.

"Ahoy, ahoy!" cried the others, joining in the chorus.

The beat of the engines stopped.

They had been heard.

Another ten minutes sufficed to bring the boat alongside, and the boys clambered up the chains and got on deck, while the professor was lifted up in a sling.

A tall, thin man, with a closely-shaven face, advanced to meet them.

"Who are you?" he inquired.

"Castaways, sir," replied Dick, making a bow.

"What ship?"

Dick told him they were apprentices on board a ship trading in mahogany from Honduras to Hartlepool, which had been wrecked in a storm, they only contriving to get into the boat; that his companions were dumb, and that they had been two days and one night without food, and that the professor was a passenger, who had been taken ill.

"I will give you a passage to the first port," answered the gentleman, who was the captain; you will have to mess with the crew. Go forward. The passenger who is ill shall be placed in a berth and attended to."

Turning away, he spoke to his lieutenant, and immediately the measured beat of the engines was heard.

The ship began to forge ahead and was soon dashing through the foaming waves, now roughly agitated by the rising breeze.

CHAPTER XXVI.

A DUMB BOY.

DICK saw that the name of the ship which had picked him up was the *Belle of New Orleans*.

This set all doubts in his mind at rest.

He was on board the vessel owned by Crawley Vipond, the treacherous and false friend of Harold Dugard, otherwise Captain Nemo, of the *Enigma*.

A strange curiosity to see Adele, the wife of Harold Dugard, took possession of him.

He did not doubt that he should have the opportunity before long.

Dick's first care was to see the professor carefully placed in a berth.

He was really very ill.

Dick advised him not to say anything to anybody, and to leave the management of affairs to him.

This he promised to do.

The first mate had a knowledge of surgery, and he said that the professor required profound rest for a few days, as his nervous system had been overtaxed, and the wound in his head might bring on brain fever, but that if kept quiet he would soon be well.

Ted wandered about the ship, looking here and there with boyish curiosity.

She was a fine vessel of modern build, well fitted, and fully manned.

Messiter leant against the main mast, glad to think he had gained his freedom, and wondering what new adventure awaited him.

A sailor came up to him, and exclaimed:

"Now, then, you lazy lubber, I guess you'll have to stir your stumps on board this craft."

"Eh?" said Messiter, forgetting he was dumb.

"The captain didn't tell you you was to be waited on, did he?" continued the sailor.

"He—" began Messiter, checking himself immediately.

"Get out of that, or I'll help you," answered the sailor, seizing a rope's end.

"I—"

Before he could commit himself further the sailor struck him across the shoulder.

"Oh!" cried Messiter.

He rubbed his back, and, shaking his fist, exclaimed:

"You—"

But, recollecting he was dumb, he broke off abruptly.

"Well, I'm blowed," said the sailor. "They say

you're dumb, but you know your vowels. You've said A E I O U. Can't you go through the alphabet?"

Messiter laughed, and shook his head.

He had, without intending to do so, gone through the vowels.

Moving away, he joined Dick, who was looking over the taffrail at the strange vessel which they were fast leaving behind.

He could imagine the rage of her captain, first at finding his captives gone, secondly at beholding the ship he had been chasing showing him a clean pair of heels, which he was powerless to follow until the breakdown in his machinery was made good.

Messiter was about to say something in a low tone, when a youngster about sixteen approached, and exclaimed:

"Are you the castaways?"

"Yes," replied Dick.

"Captain Vipond has changed his mind respecting you."

"Indeed?"

"I am Cyren Banks, captain of the midshipmen's mess on board the *Belle of New Orleans*, and as we are shorthanded, two of our fellows having died of yellow fever, you are to pig in with us, and do duty in your turns. How does that suit your complaint?"

"Thank you, Mr. Banks," answered Dick; "we don't want to eat the bread of idleness, but I am afraid my two companions are scarcely good enough to associate with gentlemen."

"Why not?"

"You see, I am the son of an English clergyman, and I ran away to sea; my name is Lighthart."

"Glad to make your acquaintance, Lighthart," said the midshipman.

"Same to you, Banks; hope we shall live to be better acquainted."

"What were you going to say about your companions?" asked Banks.

"They are of dreadfully low extraction," answered Dick.

Messiter darted a severe look at Dick.

"Not thieves, I hope?" said Banks.

"That's just it. In London, you know, street boys are often sent to training ships when they do anything wrong."

"It's the same at New York."

"Is it? Well, you will understand me better if that's the case. This poor dumb boy, Messiter, was brought before the beak for stealing a pig, and sent to a training ship, from which he was drifted on to a merchant vessel."

"Ha! ha!" laughed Banks, giving Messiter a poke in the ribs, adding, "Who stole the pig?"

Messiter was furious, but he did not dare to speak.

He saw that Dick was having a lark with him, and indulging his love of fun at his expense.

"Messiter's mother is doing time now," continued Dick. "She got five years for illegally pawning a mangle she had hired."

A sound like a howl mingled with a groan broke from Messiter.

"Poor fellow," continued Dick, "he feels it very much. He used to be very fond of his mother, I believe, for she used to let him have all he could cadge, and never licked him with the strap if he brought home from the streets anything over a bob."

"What's his father?"

"Oh, he's a lifer."

"What's that?"

"Got penal servitude for life for kicking a man to death and then biting his nose off," replied Dick.

Messiter was red with passion, and glanced fiercely at Dick.

At this moment Ted came up.

"Here's the other," exclaimed Dick; "he never knew his parents, and has lived principally on doorsteps and in the work-house, with an occasional stay in a jail."

It was Ted's turn now to stare.

"We must look after our valuables," said Banks, with a laugh.

"You should lock up the spoons, I tell you," answered Dick; "that fellow Ted would rob a blind man."

"I'll watch him. Tell you what" said Banks, "we will make them do all the dirty work. They shall be our servants, and if they shirk we'll cob them, eh?"

"That's it," replied Dick; "lay it on thick. That Messiter is very idle and sulky."

"Will you come below? It's time the grog was served."

"I shan't be long. Go on first," answered Dick.

Banks nodded, and the three friends were left together.

There was no one near them, so they were not afraid of speaking.

"You're a nice fellow," cried Messiter. "What the deuce do you mean by it? I've a very good mind to punch your head."

"Don't do that, Harry," answered Dick, laughing. "We've been so dull lately I thought you'd enjoy a little fun."

"Not at my own expense. Fancy saying I was a thief and stole a pig."

"And that I had been in jail. It's too bad, Master Dick," said Ted. "If I am only an odd boy, I've got my feelings."

"You'd better be civil, both of you, or I'll get you a cobbing," said Dick.

"If you do, I'll blow the gaff," replied Ted.

"Then you will be put in irons as an imposter."

"Aye, you to."

"Oo, oo, I shall get out of it. Don't get riled. Come below and have some grog," said Dick.

"Very sullenly the two dumb boys followed Dick into the midshipmen's cabin, where Banks and two others were assembled.

the midshipmen's mess. I guess we shall all knock in like old friends."

Dick bowed, so did Stevens and Menzies.

"We've got up a little bit of a spread in your honor," continued Banks. "It's not up to much, but as I hear you've been without food since the wreck, perhaps you won't mind falling to without further ceremony."

"Not a ha'porth," replied Dick.

"You two fellows," continued Banks, to Ted and Messiter, "will wait at table, and then, like savages, you can pick up the crumbs that are left."

With a bad grace Ted took his place behind Dick's chair.

Messiter, however, sat on a locker, and would not move.

"Is he deaf as well as dumb?" asked Banks.

"Not he," answered Dick; "the lazy beggar can hear well enough."

"All right; we'll cob him when we've fed. I'll teach him who stole the pig. Here, you Ted, hand round the pea soup."

Messiter felt hungry when he smelt the savory soup, and was quite wild with Dick for the way in which he had treated him.

"It's too bad," he muttered; "a joke's a joke, but this is going too far."

"What sort of a ship's this?" said Dick.

"Very tidy," answered Menzies.

"Where are you bound?"

"Nowhere in particular. Our captain is a gentleman of fortune and prefers the sea to the land, so he sails about from place to place. We have good pay, good grub, and plenty of liberty when in port."

"So you've got nothing to grumble at."

"No, I guess our lines are cast in pleasant places, Mr. Lighthart," answered Menzies.

"Never been in any danger," said Dick.

"Well, I've had my share," returned Menzies.

"Have you now? I'm fond of stories of adventure, danger, and such things. Can't you tell us some, while I'm tucking in the grub?"

"On land or sea—which will you have?" asked Menzies.

"Oh, it don't much matter, but as we are at sea, pitch the yarn ashore."

"You are a strange card," said Menzies.

"Yes, I was born so. Heave ahead. I can't bear to be kept waiting," Dick said, eating as he spoke.

"Well, I have crossed the desert," began Menzies.

"Eh?" said Dick. "Have you been across the desert?"

"Yes."

"Oh, you know something, then. Fire away. I'm all attention."

"I have felt the burning sun streaming down upon my head, and the hot sands blister my feet, while my thirst was so great as to be almost intolerable."

"Why didn't you drink, then?" said Dick.

"Our supply of water had become exhausted, and we traveled on, hoping to reach a spot

"What's up?" asked Dick, who saw his haste.

"Perhaps you know as well as I do," answered Banks, suddenly.

Dick was puzzled.

He descended to the cabin and Menzies explained to him in a few words what had happened.

"So you can talk, can you?" said Dick. "You deceitful beggars. What do you mean by shamming?"

"It's your fault," answered Messiter. "I shouldn't have hollered if you had not began chaffing, and get me a cobbling."

"Oh, Harry, Harry," exclaimed Dick, with mock seriousness; "you ought to have been flayed alive before you let on. But no matter, leave it all to me."

"What are we to say?"

"Say nothing. Refer everybody to me, that's all you have got to do."

"At this juncture the first lieutenant entered the cabin and exclaimed in a gruff voice:

"You three lads have to come to the captain's cabin at once."

"Lead the way," answered Dick, waving his hand with a tragic air. "We are prepared to die; but I warn you, Mr. Yankee, that we are English, and the British lion is not one of those animals with whose tail you can trifle with impunity."

Dick was in his element now a new danger had arisen. He liked to get into rows and difficulties just for the excitement and fun of getting out of them.

Once, when in London for a holiday, he got into an omnibus without a farthing in his pocket to pay his fare, just for the amusement of having a row with the conductor at the end of the journey.

He said it made boys sharp to try experiments of that kind.

But on that occasion the conductor of the bus took it out of him by a good kick in the rear, which made him hobble home rather lame, sadder if not wiser.

Dick said it was all in the day's work, and his motto was, you must give and take in this world.

The lieutenant led the way to Captain Vipond's cabin, which was sumptuously furnished.

Every article had been purchased regardless of expense.

"You sent for us, I think?" exclaimed Dick, who resolved upon taking the high hand.

Captain Vipond's face darkened.

"How dare you speak to me in that insolent manner?" he asked.

"Because in the first place, I am a gentleman by birth and education, and therefore your equal," replied Dick.

"And secondly?" demanded the captain, biting his lips.

Dick advanced to the captain, who cried:

"Stand back!"

"Pardon me. I only want to say something privately to you."

"I refuse to hear it. You come on board my ship as a castaway, representing that your companions are dumb, whereas they can speak as well as you."

"I thought possibly they might say too much," exclaimed Dick.

"About what?"

"That which I want to talk upon privately to you."

The captain paced the carpet.

"You can speak before my lieutenant," he said at length. "have no secrets from him."

"Does he know your history during the American civil war?" asked Dick.

"No," exclaimed the captain, promptly.

"There you are!" exclaimed Dick, triumphantly. "Send everybody out of the cabin but myself, and we will have a chat."

"Lieutenant Jackson, will you oblige me by retiring?" said Captain Vipond.

"Certainly sir," answered the lieutenant, with a respectful salute.

His face, however, expressed the astonishment he felt. Captain Vipond was a tyrant.

The lieutenant could not understand his yielding to the caprice of a mere lad.

"Boys," he exclaimed, "you can go and play. If there is any more cobbing come and tell me. I'll promise the first one who touches you four dozen, in a brace of shakes."

Messiter and Ted followed the lieutenant out of the room.

Dick and Captain Vipond were alone together.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

DICK TALKS LIKE A "DUTCH UNCLE."

"I'm going to talk like a Dutch uncle, Captain Crawley Vipond," exclaimed Dick.

"I am here to listen," answered the captain.

"Perhaps you are not aware how a Dutch uncle does talk?"

"Frankly, I am not."

"Well, I'll tell you. He comes straight to the point. There is no humbug about him, and he generally knocks the man he talks to into a cocked hat."

"Does he?" exclaimed the captain, laconically.

"Perhaps you don't know what being knocked into a cocked hat is like?" continued Dick.

"No; I must plead ignorance."

"Suppose I were to make myself more master of this vessel than you are yourself, and do as I chose on board—how would you feel?"

"Words would be unable to paint my surprise," replied the captain.

"Exactly. Well, that is being knocked into a cocked hat," said Dick, sitting down and crossing his knees complacently.

"You're a very curious boy," exclaimed the captain.

"Who and what are you?"

"I have already told you I am the son of a gentleman," replied Dick. "I have never done anything seedy, and am not ashamed of the name of Lighthead."

"Well?"

"Can you say as much?"

Captain Vipond was silent.

"Some people," continued Dick, "would be uncharitable enough to call a man a scoundrel if he betrayed the confidence of a friend and ran away with his wife."

"From whom did you hear that scandal?" asked the captain, his livid lips quivering.

"From—" and Dick whispered in his ear.

Crawley Vipond staggered as if a snake had stung him.

"Have you ever been in America?" he asked.

"Never."

"Then you must have met him?"

"Yes."

"Where?"

"On board his ship," replied Dick. "Other men besides yourself can buy ships, you know, and when he found you had not courage enough to face him on land he determined to hunt you down on the sea."

"He lives! he lives!" cried Vipond in an agonized voice. "Oh, God! my presentiments did not deceive me. He lives!"

"For vengeance," put in Dick, solemnly.

The wretched man sank upon a divan and covered his face with his hands.

"Now," said Dick, coolly, "that's what I call talking like a Dutch uncle. You are knocked into a cocked hat without any trouble."

"Boy," said the captain, raising his head, "beware how you madden me."

"Oh, I shouldn't be afraid of you," exclaimed Dick.

"I've met a mad bull in a country lane before to-day. Shall I tell you how I manage a mad bull when I come across him?"

There was no reply.

"I dodge his horns and lay hold of his tail," continued Dick, "and then I leather into his flank with a big stick. It's a lovely plan. Try it."

"When did you meet him?" asked Vipond, his eyes almost starting from his head.

"On board his boat, or whatever you may like to call it," answered Dick. "Didn't I tell you so before?"

"Where?"

"I haven't left him more than half-a-dozen hours."

"Why did you tell me a lie, then?"

"Because I did not know exactly how to treat you. My companions might have talked too much, so I said they were dumb. To avoid your asking unpleasant questions, I cooked up a story of a wreck."

"Then you were not wrecked?"

"No more than you are," answered Dick.

"Why did you leave that vessel?"

"I didn't like the captain, and took the first opportunity of breaking the connection which existed between us."

"You talk in riddles," said Crawley Vipond.

"Let me ask you one or two questions," observed Dick.

"If you like."

"How is Adele?"

"You know that name?" cried Vipond, starting again.

"Of course I do. I make it my business always to know everything. How is the lady?"

"She is suffering. Her health is not good."

"Serve her right too," said Dick; "she had no business to leave a good husband, who was gallantly fighting for the South, while you were skulking at home."

Crawley Vipond rose angrily.

He did not think it dignified to bear Dick's taunts any longer.

"Have you forgotten," he asked, "that I am captain of this ship, and have the power of life and death?"

"You won't have it long, if you don't look out," answered Dick.

"Why shall I not?"

"Simply because a certain person is after you."

"After me?"

"Decidedly. If you had not had the luck of Old Nick, and your own too, you would all have gone to the bottom last night."

"How is that?" asked Vipond, trembling like a leaf.

"If I tell you all, will you treat me and my friends as passengers on board this ship, and give us a hundred pounds each when we land at the first port, if ever we do land?"

"Yes, I will; but why should we not land?"

"It all depends upon the captain; had not his machinery broken down, you must have perished in the night."

"Impossible," said Vipond. "Look at my vessel; do you see how she is armed and manned?"

"I admit all that; but suppose," said Dick, "that a thing like a conical shot darts right through your ship in the dead of night, and makes two big holes, one on each side, what would you do then?"

"Sink," replied Vipond.

"Of course you would."

"I wish you would not mystify me any more. What is it I have to dread? If I know what evil threatens me, I am better able to look it in the face!" exclaimed Vipond, impatiently.

"I will put you on your guard," replied Dick.

As briefly as he could, he told Captain Vipond how he had left his school for a sail, been run down, picked up, wrecked by the strange vessel, and taken inside.

And he concluded with the manner in which he had overheard the secret of the captain, and his escape during the night with Ted and Messiter.

Vipond was much agitated.

"I thank you," he said, "for your confidence. Your story comes upon me like a revelation. Not having heard of him for so long, I fancied him dead."

"You will always be in danger from him," said Dick.

"I know it, but I do not deserve his vengeance so much as you may think. He was always a morose and gloomy man; I was his wife's sweetheart before she married him. I am willing to admit that I wronged him in taking her away from him, and I suppose sin always brings its penalty with it in this world."

A fragile form had entered the room without being perceived.

It was that of a slim, dark-haired, girl-like beauty, whose lovely countenance was very sad, but sweet even in its sadness.

Its expression was that of a melancholy resignation.

"So," continued Vipond, "my enemy will be satisfied with nothing less than my death?"

"And his wife's also," answered Dick.

A faint cry came from the fragile form.

Both turned round.

"Adele," exclaimed Vipond, "why are you here, and what have you heard?"

"The door of my cabin was open, and I have heard all this young gentleman has said," she replied.

Captain Vipond struck his forehead in despair.

As for Dick, he could not take his eyes off the saint-like countenance of Adele.

He thought it impossible that so beautiful a body could hide a sinful soul.

"Go to your cabin again," said Vipond, imperiously.

"No, I will not," she replied, gently but firmly. "I must speak to —"

"Lighthead," said Dick.

"To Mr. Lighthead," she continued. "You have been with my husband for some time. Perhaps you think I wronged him, but I give you my word of honor as a lady that I fancied—nay, I believed—that he died on the field of battle at Gettysburg."

"Who told you so, madam?" asked Dick.

"He did," she answered, pointing to Vipond.

The man writhed under this denunciation, and showed himself to be the treacherous coward he was.

"I deserve my husband's hatred, and do not dread his vengeance," she went on; "indeed, I honor and admire him for retiring from the world, and giving up all to work it out. If you should see him again, sir—"

"I hope not," interrupted Dick.

"You may meet. This is a world of surprises. Tell him, if you do see him again, that I only married Mr. Vipond when I was assured of his death."

So saying, she walked slowly away, treading so lightly, and seeming so fairy-like, that her visit was more like that of a ghost than that of a human being.

Crawley Vipond wiped the perspiration from his forehead.

"I would rather have given a thousand pounds than that lady should have heard what you said," he exclaimed.

"Was it my fault?" asked Dick.

"No; but you are like a stormy petrel—you forbode misfortune."

"You have brought it on yourself," replied Dick, boldly.

myself and companions, and any one else you care about in it, and take to the sea."

"But we are many miles from any port."

"No matter. Better trust to the waves than to your enemy. You can tell your first lieutenant to go to some harbor and await your orders."

"I must have time to think over it."

"The man who hesitates is lost," replied Dick.

"I will think," was Crawley Vipond's only answer.

Dick went away to join Messiter and Ted.

"At all events, he muttered, "we have a good start of the ship, and I will hope for the best."

CHAPTER XXIX.

DICK MAKES HIMSELF AT HOME.

GOING into the midshipmen's berth, Dick found his companions awaiting his return.

Banks and Menzies were also there.

"I say," said Banks, "your pals have become dumb again, for they won't say a word in answer to my polite inquiries after their health."

"May I talk, master Dick?" asked Ted.

"Now you may. Fire away."

"I will. I'll fire away a good un," replied Ted. "It's been hard lines for me to hold my tongue all this time, I can tell you, and since I may speak, I'm on that cove like grub."

"What have I done?" said Banks.

"You're the darndest specimen of a Yankee skunk I've seen this long time, and if you don't like that, I'm game for a dust up with fists or anything else."

"Turn it up, Ted," said Dick.

"Well, sir, if I am only an odd boy, I've got my feelings."

"Keep them to yourself. We are going to be jolly. I want Mr. Banks and his friends to join me in a little spread I am going to give."

"I'm on," replied Banks.

"What do you say to a little salmon, ducks and peas, lamb and mint sauce, etc., all potted, of course."

"Very good," said Banks. "But where will you get them?"

"From the captain's servant."

"Next week," said Banks, derisively. "You won't get much out of him, I tell you."

"Why not?"

"He's a hot member, he is, and not fond of parting."

"Ted," said Dick.

"Yes, sir," replied Ted.

"Go to the captain's servant, and present my compliments to his master, and tell him I want the best fare he can supply me with."

Ted went away.

"Well, you are a cool fish, I don't think," said Banks.

"Always was so considered," replied Dick.

In a short time Ted came back, loaded with a variety of potted and tinned delicacies, which, when spread out on the table, made a feast that had never been seen in the midshipmen's berth before.

"How do you do it?" asked Banks, with his mouth full.

"It's a way I've got," answered Dick.

"Did you know the captain before?"

"Of course I did; I know everybody."

"Don't chaff," said Banks, looking puzzled.

"I'm not chaffing; I never chaff; I leave that to Yankees."

"Don't you insult me because I'm an American," cried Banks. "My blood's soon up, my lad."

"So is mine," answered Dick.

"Will you fight?" asked Banks, getting up and clutching his fists.

"No," replied Dick. "For the short time we shall be together it is not worth while. I want to be jolly, but if you want a hiding badly, I don't mind coming on deck and giving you one."

"You shall have a try," said Banks, who was losing his temper.

"Just stop a bit," exclaimed Dick. "What's your father?"

"An apothecary at Salem, Mass."

"What's Mass.?"

"Why, short for Massachusetts, a State in America,"

"Oh, I couldn't think of fighting with an apothecary's son," replied Dick; "I'm too much of a swell for that."

"Oh, no, too much the gentleman."

"How do you like that, then?" inquired Banks, as he threw a tin of salmon half empty at him.

Dick ducked his head and the missile missed him.

"Thank you," he replied, "that's a bad shot. I prefer my salmon in small quantities; I am not a Yankee hog."

Banks got up and walked towards him.

"Ted," said Dick.

"Sir," answered Ted.

"Slog that fellow for me. I mean the chemist's assistant apothecary's son, or whatever he calls himself."

"Yes, sir," said Ted.

"And when you have polished him off, put him in his bunk, for I know he won't be able to move for a day or two."

"Won't you fight me, you cur?" asked Banks, trembling with passion.

"No, you see I won't," answered Dick.

"Why not?"

"I only fight with gentlemen."

"What do you call me?"

"I think I said a chemist's assistant—a man who makes up pills and things of that sort, so I hand you over to my servant. Wire in, Ted," said Dick.

Ted did not require any further orders.

He quickly slipped into the midshipman of the *Belle of New Orleans*, and in less than half a minute they were at it hammer and tongs.

Ted was as tough as a porpoise, and as wiry as a badger, having been knocked about all his life, and his knowledge of the art of fighting was pretty good.

In five minutes' time Banks was lying on his back, half stunned, and gasping for breath.

"Water he murmured, faintly.

"Give him a drink, and put him to bed," said Dick.

Ted did as he was told, and about this time Stephens came down and joined Menzies, who told him what had happened.

"Gentlemen," said Dick, "if you are not satisfied, Ted, my servant, is at your service, and lives upon fighting. The more he has, the more he wants. If, on the other hand, you are satisfied, I shall be glad to receive you as guests at my festive board."

"Go on and feed," exclaimed Banks, from his bunk. "It was my fault. I guess I shall be all right soon. Lightheart isn't half a bad fellow, though I wish he had fought me himself."

"Too much the gentleman. You weren't good enough for me," answered Dick. "If you hadn't let on about the apothecary, I might have obliged you."

Banks could not help laughing, though he was badly knocked about.

"You make yourself at home," he remarked.

"Bound to do it," answered Dick; "it's my way."

The two midshipmen, Menzies and Stephens, did not hesitate any longer.

They set to work with knife and fork, and made an excellent dinner, of a sort they had not been accustomed to.

In the evening Dick went to dine with the captain.

He passed the afternoon in wondering what his decision would be, hoping that he would decide upon leaving the *Belle of New Orleans* to her fate.

While his enemy lived, no one on board Crawley Vipond's vessel could reckon on living from one day to the other.

CHAPTER XXX.

A FATAL FALL.

THE *Belle of New Orleans* steamed night and day from the neighborhood of her dreaded foe.

None of the crew could understand the captain's haste, but Dick smiled to himself, for he knew that Crawley Vipond dreaded the well-deserved vengeance of Harold Dugard.

The professor progressed slowly toward recovery, and the captain of the vessel behaved very kindly to him and his companions.

Dick dined continually with the captain and Adele, becoming on friendly terms with them, and recounting the singular life he had led on board the strange vessel.

Vipond and Adele were never tired listening to him.

He discovered that Adele's life was not a happy one.

Since she had seen Dick and learned that her husband lived, she could not forgive the man that had basely betrayed her into marrying him by saying that Dugard was dead.

Dick was the unwilling witness of several quarrels between them.

More than once Vipond had threatened her with personal violence, though he had not as yet resorted to extremes.

The ship's course was directed toward the African coast, but they only touched at ports to obtain coals, which were necessary for the working of the vessel.

Captain Vipond would not take Dick's advice, which was to abandon the ship, lest the enemy should find and sink her.

He was an obstinate man, and would have his own way.

Banks, the midshipman, freely forgave Dick for the thrashing which he had caused him to receive at the hands of Ted.

He was not a lad who would bear malice, but Menzies, the second midshipman, was of a very different disposition, and he had taken a full dislike to Dick.

It was an instinctive sort of hatred, for Dick had never done him any harm.

Perhaps he was jealous of his frank and generous nature, which did not contrast at all favorably with his own mean and malicious character.

However that might be, he never lost an opportunity of showing his dislike, though Dick treated him with the silent contempt that a noble mastiff displays toward a snarling cur.

Captain Vipond often used to take long walks with Dick by his side, on the quarter-deck, and invite him into his cabin.

This favoritism displeased Menzies very much.

"What does our skipper want to make a friend of a fellow like that Lightheart for?" he remarked to Banks.

"Because he chooses, I suppose," answered Banks. "I guess the captain isn't going to ask your permission."

"There is Lightheart," replied Menzies, his little eyes sparkling maliciously. "Wait a bit, I'll show him something."

There was a pail, with a mop in it, close by.

It had been used for swabbing the decks, and taking up the mop, Menzies began to trundle it.

A shower of not over-choice water sprinkled Dick in the face, much to his disgust.

"Now, then, clumsy," he said, "what's your game?"

"Eh!" asked Menzies.

"Are you aware that my figure-head don't want swabbing?"

"No. I thought, as you are dirty enough, a little water wouldn't hurt you," replied Menzies, instantly.

"What's sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander, my lad," answered Dick. "You look as if soap and water and you weren't very good friends."

"I always have a bath once a year, whether I want it or not," said Menzies, who was not noted among his companions for his cleanliness.

Dick laughed at this reply, though it was spoken seriously enough.

"I'll see what I can do for you," he said.

Quickly snatching up the pail, he rushed upon Menzies before the latter could escape, and emptied the contents over his head, upon which he let the pail fall.

Half smothered and blinded, Menzies was for a moment bewildered.

At last, urged by a kick from behind, he removed the pail and glanced fiercely at Dick.

Drawing a knife, he ran at Dick, who seized a spike which was lying near.

"No, you don't, my boy, not this time. Mother says you musn't," he exclaimed, as he brought the spike down on his wrist, which he nearly dislocated, sending the knife flying along the deck.

Menzies uttered a howl of rage.

"I'll have my revenge for this," he cried.

"As soon as you like, my innocent," replied Dick; "only take a fool's advice, and don't try to knife me again, or I shan't let you off so easy. I hate such dirty Spanish ways. Be off."

Menzies slunk away without saying anything more openly, though his muttered threats were heard as he went towards the hatch.

"You've made an enemy there," observed Banks.

"I don't care; it wasn't my fault," replied Dick, "was it?"

"No, I can't say it was."

"I should be a blooming idiot if I were to stand any cheek fellows like that choose to favor me with."

"Still, I shouldn't like to offend Menzies. His father was Spanish, and he will cherish up a grudge for months and years."

"Let him; he won't get the better of me," replied Dick.

"Well, look out, that's all. You're so pretty I shouldn't like to lose you."

"Thank you. Do you want to borrow half-a-crown?"

"Not this time."

"Oh, I thought you did," said Dick, laughing; "it's generally that way when butter's plentiful."

Banks laughed too.

"There is the captain beckoning you," he said, all at once;

"what do you find to talk about?"

"I'm teaching him navigation," replied Dick.

"Dickens," said Banks.

"I am really."

"You've made the skipper talk more since you've been on board than he ever did before. Cut along. His arm's going like a pump handle."

"Stroll on. See you at mess," said Dick, as he walked away, and joined Captain Vipond on the poop.

The latter seemed deeply agitated.

"Lightheart," he said, "will you do me a favor?"

"Yes, sir, willingly," answered Dick.

"Go into my cabin. I had an unfortunate quarrel with—my wife. In

"Never; my race is run. What can I expect? Harold would only curse me; and with Crawley Vipond, since the discovery I have made of his villainy, my life would be very—very bitter."

"You were not to blame," said Dick.

"Oh, yes; I should have cherished Harold's memory. I had no right to listen to Vipond. I am not the chaste, pure being that Harold loved to picture me in his silent tent upon the war field. I loathe myself."

She fell back, and appeared to be greatly exhausted.

"Is she dying?" asked Dick, wildly.

"The lady's heart just beats, and that's all, sir," answered the steward.

"I will fetch Captain Vipond," exclaimed Dick.

He ran up the companion, and clutching the skipper's arm, said:

"Come!"

"Is her condition dangerous?" asked Vipond hoarsely.

"Lose no time, or you will be too late."

The captain walked with long strides across the deck, followed by Dick.

"Anything up, sir?" asked a sailor of Dick, as he passed.

Dick's indignation was great.

Without thinking what the effect of his words might be upon the crew, he answered:

"The captain's killed his wife by a foul and cowardly blow; that is all."

"And enough, too—douse my lights," said the man.

He went forward to communicate the news to his shipmates.

Dick descended the companion after Captain Vipond, and once more entered the cabin where the dreadful tragedy had been enacted.

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE MUTINY AMONG THE CREW.

In justice to the captain of the *Belle of New Orleans*, we must say that he seemed deeply shocked at the result of his violent haste.

Evidently he had not contemplated such an accident as had occurred.

"Adele!" he cried, "Adele, speak to me, my pet, my best beloved one."

Only a feeble movement of the lips answered him.

"She will never speak more on earth," said the steward.

There was a moment's pause.

Every one in the cabin suffered the most intense agony. The steward was wrong.

She did speak once more, but it was her last utterance.

"Heaven forgive me!" she murmured, while a sweet, pathetic expression stole over her pale but lovely countenance.

"She speaks," said the captain, bending down.

"I sinned innocently," she continued; "Jesus, Saviour, I come, I come."

Great beads of perspiration rolled down the Captain's face.

Dick's tears flowed unrestrainedly.

The dying girl's lips moved once again.

Her utterance was scarcely audible, but Dick caught it.

"Harold! darling Harold, mine no more, oh! the dreary, dreary moorland, oh, the barren, barren shore. Harold, dar—ling Har—"

That was all.

Her mind was wandering, and she was quoting Tennyson, mixing Harold Dugard's name in her confused speech.

She had said that his would be the last name on her lips.

It was her dying request to Dick that he should tell him so, if ever he again met the mysterious captain.

She had kept her word.

It remained for Dick to keep his, if he ever had the chance of obeying her.

Adele's head fell back, and the steward let her lay upon the carpet of the saloon.

"It is all over, sir," he said, under his breath.

Captain Vipond choked back a great sob that came up in his throat.

The steward and Dick were about to withdraw and leave him to his grief.

Suddenly he looked up, and glaring fiercely at Dick, exclaimed:

"This is your doing, boy!"

"Mine?" said Dick.

"Yes; had you not crept like a serpent into our Paradise, this would not have happened."

"I cannot have a row with you here, Captain Vipond," answered Dick.

"But you shall hear what I say!" thundered the captain, whose eyes rolled wildly.

"We are in the presence of the dead, and I will not answer you. Come on deck and I am at your service," said Dick.

He walked calmly out of the cabin, leaving Captain Vipond alone with the dead body of Adele.

Evidently at that moment the captain was not master of himself.

He saw snatched from him, and by his own wicked, cowardly act, the woman for whom he had sinned and dared so much.

She was gone.

Harold Dugard, however, lived, and he had to dread his vengeance.

When Dick reached the deck, he saw the crew all together in a group.

The man who had spoken to him before detached himself from the group, and advanced towards him.

"Well, my man, what is it you want with me?" asked Dick.

"You're a gentleman, sir," was the reply.

"I hope so."

"I'm only a common seaman, but I've got a heart for

all that, and I calculate I know what's right, as well as any man."

"Seamen are generally blunt, honest, straightforward fellows, and I see no reason why they should be different to the rest," said Dick.

"They call me Soft Tommy, sir, cos I was always a fool with women."

"Well, Tom, my old sea horse, what's your grievance?"

"Is the lady dead, sir?"

"She is, I am sorry to say."

"And the captain struck her down?" asked the sailor.

"He did."

"Then we've made up our minds," continued Soft Tommy, "that we won't sail under him no more. I guess we mean it, boys."

He turned to the crew as he spoke, from whom came a unanimous shout of approval.

"Wait a bit," said Dick; "I'll go and talk to the captain about that. If I can make any arrangement for you, I will."

In an instant he had returned to the cabin, on the threshold of which he met Crawley Vipond.

"Back for your life!" he cried.

"Do you dare threaten me?" asked Vipond.

"No. I speak for your good."

"How?"

"The crew are in open mutiny," replied Dick.

"What for?" asked Vipond, agast.

"They have heard that you have killed your wife, and refuse to sail under you any more. The mutiny has not assumed large proportions yet, and I do not see the officers with the men. There may yet be time to quell it."

"I will pistol the dogs," replied the captain, fiercely.

"Leave that to me. In the temper they are in now your life would not be safe on deck. Give me a brace of revolvers."

Vipond pointed to a case which lay upon the table. It contained two handsome pistols.

"Six-shooters," said Vipond.

"Are they loaded?"

"Yes."

"I will take them," replied Dick, "and see what I can do for you. It will be bad for us if we allow this mob to have their own way."

"I am nearly distracted," said Vipond; "forget what I said just now. You are my friend, Lightheart."

"Scarcely that," answered Dick; "but I feel sorry for you, and have been long enough on board ship to understand the value of discipline."

With a pistol in each hand Dick regained the deck.

The crew were talking excitedly among themselves.

"My men," said Dick, "listen to me."

They all turned round, and no sound was heard but the beat of the engines, which rose and fell with a measured cadence peculiar to machinery.

"I am no friend to mutineers," continued Dick; "and it is my object to get to Zanzibar with my companions. When you arrive there, you can all be paid off."

"What's the use of paying us off in a place like that?" answered Soft Tommy, who constituted himself the spokesman.

"What do you want?"

"I guess our game is to make New York; but we are not going to sail about any longer under a murderer, who does no trade, and does not know where he is going to."

"You will do as I please, not as you like," replied Dick.

Soft Tommy laughed defiantly, and his merriment was echoed by all his companions.

"I calc'late," he continued, sneeringly, "that we ain't going to be put down by a strip of a lad."

"Go forward, my man, and all you fellows go about your duty," cried Dick, "or by Heaven I'll shoot the first man who disobeys me!"

The men hesitated as they saw the gleaming barrels of the revolvers, one held in each hand, and flashing in the sunlight.

"I've got twelve lives here," exclaimed Dick, seeing the advantage he had gained, "and I shall not be particular as to what I do. You are mutineers, mind you, and the law will not take any particular notice if you are wiped out."

Soft Tommy did not move.

"I'll tell you what it is, youngster," he exclaimed, "you're in the swim with the captain, and have made your book to cast anchor with him."

"Yes, I have," answered Dick.

"Down you go, then," continued Tommy, making a rush at him.

Dick stepped on one side and put his back against the mainmast.

"I warn you, Tom," he said, "that if you don't obey orders, I shall shoot."

"Whose orders?"

"Mine. I don't want to hurt you, but I am not going to be bullied by you or any man. Stand back!"

Soft Tommy laughed derisively.

"You daren't shoot," he said. "You're too much of a cub to hit if you did."

Tommy advanced again armed with an iron bar. Again Dick warned him.

No notice was taken of the admonition, and Dick fired one barrel.

Soft Tommy put his hand to his heart, and fell back shot through the leg.

The men were appalled at this sudden act, and ran helter-skelter forward, not wishing to share the fate of their unfortunate companion.

At this juncture the captain, who had heard the shot, appeared upon the deck.

The sight of him was the signal for a howl of execration from the men.

Dick saw Menzies amongst the men, talking to first one and then another.

He was evidently inciting them to further acts of insubordination.

"What shall I do?" asked the captain, who at this

crisis, showed himself devoid of that courage which he ought to have displayed.

"Go below, Captain Vipond, and leave me to manage them," answered Dick.

It was clear that the men had been discontented for some time, and were only waiting for an opportunity to break out.

The captain did not like to retreat, but moved away toward the cabin without actually going below.

Dick advanced fearlessly towards the men.

"Look here my fine fellows!" he exclaimed, "I will be your captain if you like, but we must have no mutiny. You wouldn't mind a boy captain would you?"

"No, sir," replied half a dozen of them.

"Come and talk to me, then. Don't listen to that little abortion who is telling you a pack of nonsense and lies.

Dick succeeded in attracting the attention of the men.

"Your friend Soft Tommy, isn't much hurt. I only sent a ball through his leg to keep him quiet. Pick him up and see to him. He won't say it's my fault when he gets better."

The crew seemed to be divided in opinion. Some, led by Menzies, were against yielding to Dick, while others inclined to give in.

While affairs were in this desperate state, a terrible shock ran through the ship.

"She has struck on a rock. She is sinking. Man the boats—rig the pumps," was heard on all sides.

Dick had his own opinion. He fancied that the strange vessel had found them out, but nothing was to be seen, and it was difficult in the hurry of the moment to come to any settled conclusion. During the time he was parleying with the mutineers, Ted and Messiter had come to his side. The professor, who had improved in health, had also been attracted to the deck by the loud voices, and the sound of a shot.

"Stand by this boat," said Dick, pointing to one on the starboard side. They obeyed him.

"Lower away when I give the word," he cried.

The captain came to his side, and seizing him by the arm, exclaimed: "What new misfortune is this?"

"I leave you to guess," answered Dick.

"Do you mean—" "I mean that it's good enough to get out of it at once, for you won't be afloat in ten minutes."

Captain Vipond pressed his hands to his forehead as if he was not master of himself at this terrible crisis. The death of Adele had in reality unnerved him.

Taking the professor by the arm, Dick helped him into the boat, saying: "Now, sir, age before honesty."

Mr. Crab obeyed like a child.

When he was in, Dick gave the signal, and the boat was lowered.

"Go on, Harry, and you Ted," he said. "I'll come with you."

"Hadn't we better get a bag of biscuits or something?" inquired Messiter.

"That be hanged; there isn't time. Go

Already the pangs of hunger and thirst began to attack them.

Their only hope was that they might be picked up by some passing ship in the morning.

The west coast of Africa was on the left, but there was little or no hope of reaching it.

Vipond, though very sad, seemed to recover himself slightly now that he had left the *Belle of New Orleans*.

He took command of the boat, and declared that rowing was a useless waste of strength.

With Dick's help, he stepped a mast, and set a small sail. The wind was favorable, and as they were in the track of ships, they reasonably expected to be picked up.

When the moon was up, and all but Dick and the captain were asleep, the latter said :

" If we should reach land, what are your intentions, my lad ? "

" I mean to try and reach Zanzibar," replied Dick : " it has long been my wish to explore the interior of Africa, and join Dr. Livingstone if I can."

" You do not pretend to follow the sea as a profession ? "

" No. I like the sea well enough," replied Dick, " but not sufficiently to devote my life to it."

" Nothing would please me more," said Vipond, " than to bury myself in the African forests. Harold Dugard will scarcely find me there, and if he did we should meet on equal terms."

" Do not be too sure of his finding you; Dugard is a wonderful man, and he only lives for revenge on you."

" If I find money for your expedition into Africa, will you allow me to join you ? " asked Vipond.

" Gladly; the want of money is all that stands in my way," replied Dick. " I have heard that it is impossible for a caravan to travel in Africa without a vast store of cloth and beads to satisfy the natives."

" That is settled, then ; in future, we shall be companions and you shall take the command."

" We must get out of our present position before we can talk safely about the future," replied Dick, evasively.

Waking up Ted to watch and mind the sail, he and the captain lay down in their turn, and were soon asleep.

What the fate of the *Belle of New Orleans*, was they could only guess.

Both fancied that the strange ship had struck her, and she had gone down with all hands unless the crew took to the boats.

If so, Adele would find an eternal grave in the bosom of the ocean.

Morning broke serene and calm, but not a sail appeared upon the surface of the horizon.

The heat was very great, and toward evening the sufferings of the castaways became intense.

They looked hungrily at one another.

Dick remembered how he had heard of shipwrecked men devouring one another, and relishing the repulsive meal as famished dogs eat offal.

When the third day came, they sat staring at one another's parched and blackened lips, their faces haggard and pinched, their eyes sunk and lustreless.

It was evident that one thought filled each mind. But no one liked to speak first.

Captain Vipond at last said, in a hollow voice :

" We are companions in misfortune, and life is sweet. The question is—Shall we sacrifice the life of one of our number to preserve the lives of the rest ? "

There was a murmur of assent.

Hunger and thirst had transformed them into savages.

" It is a horrible thing to do," remarked the professor, " but if anything can justify cannibalism, it is our present condition."

" Let us draw lots," said Dick. " I will tear up the sleeve of my jacket in unequal strips, and the one who draws the shortest strip shall be killed with a knife for the benefit of the others."

Menzies drew his knife, which he always carried in his belt.

" This will do the trick, I guess," he observed.

Messiter and Ted trembled in silent horror, while Banks, who was thoroughly exhausted, lay at the bottom of the boat, as if he did not understand what was going on.

Finding that there was no opposition to the dreadful scheme, Dick tore off an arm from his jacket.

He then made seven strips, one being shorter than all the rest.

Tearing out the pocket from his trousers, he put the strips into the bag.

" Who'll go first ? " he exclaimed, holding it up.

" Hand it over," answered Messiter.

He was the first to draw. Ted followed, the captain going third, and the professor fourth.

No one had the courage to look at his strip, but held it firmly grasped in his hand, waiting until all were drawn, when they would be measured side by side. Though staggering with weakness himself, and dizzy with thirst and hunger, Dick went through his work manfully.

He crawled over the thwarts and held out the bag to Banks, who extended his hand.

" What am I to do ? " he said, faintly.

" Draw," said Dick, huskily.

" What for ? "

" To see who is to be killed."

" I guess I'm on if there is any fresh meat to be had," said Banks, his eyes sparkling. " It don't matter much whether it's cattle or human."

Menzies came next, and it was Dick's turn to dip his hand in last.

The fierce rays of the tropical sun darted down upon their unprotected heads.

The sparkling sea, shimmering in the sunshine, lay temptingly on all sides of them.

But they knew that to drink the salt water would produce madness.

The last act in the feast of blood was drawing near.

Soon the sickening tragedy would be accomplished.

As yet none of them realized the full horror of their fearful position.

There was a chance for each of them, and it was with temulous anxiety that they watched Dick draw his lot.

" Put them all down on that thwart," exclaimed Captain Vipond.

Banks struggled to his knees, and each one bent over and displayed in his strip of cloth.

Suddenly there was a murmur.

" Lightheart's got it," said Menzies, in a tone of triumph.

Even in such an hour he could not rise above his paltry hatred.

It was indeed true.

Dick had drawn the fatal lot.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

OLD FRIENDS.

WITH a sigh of resignation Dick sank upon a seat. His heart was too full for words.

Death stared him in the face, but like a brave English boy, he did not shrink from it.

Menzies began to sharpen his knife upon the side of the boat.

He was like a butcher preparing to kill a sheep.

Suddenly Ted started up, saying, " Can't I die for Mr. Lightheart ? My life ain't worth much. I'm only an odd boy, you know."

" That wouldn't be fair," replied Dick, trying to smile, but failing lamentably.

" Kill me, I say; I don't mind dying for my young master," answered Ted, earnestly.

" No," exclaimed Dick, firmly. " The lot has fallen upon me. I am ready."

" Look sharp," said Menzies; " I'm going to be butcher."

Every one was horror-stricken at his indecent haste.

" Give the lad time to make his peace with Heaven," exclaimed the professor.

" Good-bye, Mr. Crab," said Dick, shaking his hand.

" God bless you, my boy, and forgive us if we are committing sin," replied the professor.

Ted and Messiter had each caught hold of one of Dick's hands, and their dry, bleared eyes moistened, though the tears could not flow.

" If ever you get home, Harry," said Dick, " tell them I died like a man."

" Why did you draw it ? " exclaimed Messiter. " Why was it not somebody else ? "

" Now then, stand up and look sharp," exclaimed Menzies.

" Farewell," said Captain Vipond; " I would rather it had been me."

" Never mind," replied Dick, bravely. One must die some day. Good-bye, my friends.

Unbuttoning his shirt, he bared his breast, and putting his hand on his heart, said, " Strike home."

Menzies faced him. His arm was upraised.

The murderous steel flashed in the sweltering sun, and yet Dick did not flinch.

His lips were moving as if in prayer, and his eyes were raised to heaven, as if he had already divorced his mind from thoughts of earth.

His life hung in the balance.

Just as Menzies' cruel arm was in the act of descending, Messiter dashed forward and stopped it half way.

Turning angrily upon him, Menzies exclaimed with an oath :

" What did you do that for ? "

Scarcely able to speak, Messiter pointed frantically to leeward.

" A sail ! a sail ! " he cried.

Every eye was turned in the direction indicated.

He was right.

A large merchant vessel, with all sail set, was bearing down upon them.

The knife fell from Menzies' hand, and a look of deep disappointment stole over his villainous young face.

" Saved ! saved ! " muttered Dick, as he sank down upon a thwart, and covered his face with his hands.

The reaction was too much for him.

When about to die he could be brave, but now that salvation had come unexpected at the last moment, he was as weak as any girl, and trembled in every limb, whilst deep sobs burst from him.

Signals of distress were made, but it was doubtful for some time whether they were seen.

They sailed directly towards the ship, which at last perceived them and stopped her course.

The castaways were wildly excited now.

The revulsion from despair to the certainty of hope affected each differently.

Banks was very ill; he seemed to have suffered more than the others, but even he roused a little at the good news. When he was sure that he was saved, his mind became affected, and, jumping up, he sprang into the sea. Too weak to swim, he sank like a stone, and all attempts to save him were ineffectual.

This dampened the spirits of the party.

They were taken on board the ship, and at once sent below, when a little broth and bread were given them. Four-and-twenty hours' rest and a careful dieting restored the boys to something like their former condition, though the professor and Captain Vipond were not strong enough to go on deck for some days.

Dick could not look at Menzies without a shudder, for he had so nearly been his executioner.

Going on deck, Dick looked around him. A group consisting of three people stood near the saloon hatchway. A hale, middle-aged man, a pretty little woman—who had not yet lost her girlish appearance—and a thin, gaunt, wiry person.

Surely Dick knew the faces, but he was not sure. So he rubbed his eyes and looked again.

Advancing, he exclaimed: " Am I mistaken, or do I address Mr. Snarley ? "

That was my name in days gone by," answered the person spoken to; " but I am now known to an admiring public as Signor Snarlini, the champion comic artist of the world. And now, sir, who may you be ? "

" Have you forgotten your old friend and pupil, Dick Lightheart ? If so, I am sure Polly, that is to say, Miss Agatha Mountserrat, or Mrs. Snarlini, will recollect me."

" Well, I never did ! " said Polly. " This is a surprise; but how thin you are, Mr. Lightheart, and browned by the sun ! "

" I was one of the castaways you picked up a day or two ago," answered Dick.

" I shouldn't have known you," replied old Hopkins, who was the third member of the group.

" I am proud and happy to meet an old pupil," said Mr. Snarley. " Give me your hand, Lightheart. Whoever would have thought that we should see one another on the bosom of the briny ocean ? "

" What are you doing here ? " asked Dick.

" We are going to Zanzibar, having been specially engaged by agents in England of the Sultan of that far-off clime. My fame has traveled far and wide, Lightheart, and our show is hired for six months, expenses paid out and home.

" What do you call the entertainment ? " inquired Dick.

" 'Mirth and Mystery'; or, the Clown, the Clairvoyant, and the Crocodile.' You see Polly's gone in for mesmerism and all that," replied Snarley.

" And she's very clever at it, too," put in Hopkins, " though I say it who shouldn't."

" What about the untamed savage ? Have you got that in your bill ? "

" No; we struck it out because we were going among semi-savages, and it wouldn't do. The educated crocodile's sure to draw, though; and what with the clown business, and the mesmerism, we are sure to be a success."

" We think of doing the East all round after fulfilling our engagement with the Sultan of Zanzibar," said Hopkins.

" I wish you success," replied Dick, " and am delighted to have met you all."

When Messiter came up he was as astonished as Dick had been to see the strollers.

The ship was the *Fanny Lorton*, from Southampton, and had only Mr. Snarley and his troupe on board.

Captain Vipond informed the captain that he would be answerable for all expenses incurred by his companions and himself. Consequently they had the run of the saloon and were well treated, traveling as first-class passengers.

Mr. Snarley and Polly were very happy together, and though there was occasionally something of the schoolmaster about the former, he seemed to have thoroughly entered into his new business as a showman.

Forgetting all their misfortunes, they looked forward with hope to the future, and formed a merry little party in the saloon.

Captain Vipond joined them, and, though reserved and somewhat sad, he listened with pleasure to Polly's songs, and otherwise made himself agreeable. The only exception to the rule was Professor Crab.

One night Snarley had brewed a glorious bowl of punch, and everybody was full of mirth and jollity.

" Crab," said Snarley, " fill up your glass, old son."

The professor stared at him. " Did you address your language to me sir ? " he asked.

" Of course I did. Come on, old flint; here we are again. We don't kill a pig every day. Who says punch ? " replied Snarley.

" Truly, my good sir," answered Mr. Crab. " I must request that you will be a little more choice in your language when you have occasion to speak to me."

" Halo ! " said Snarley, " who's trodden on your corns, Old Beans ? "

The professor rose angrily

"Come and join us over the friendly bowl—I forgive you, Crab," said Snarley, patting him on the back.

"Don't touch me, sir," said the professor, "or I may be tempted to dirty my hands with you."

"Go and play," answered Snarley, smiling benignantly. "It was a little stupid old man, and they won't get his shi t out any more."

The professor, boiling over with rage, retired to his corner, readjusted his spectacles, and went on writing.

In time his head fell back, and the spectacles fell from his nose.

He had gone to sleep.

The others had been playing at cards, but left off as they were tired.

"Crab's gone to sleep," remarked Messiter,

"Let's have a lark with him," said Dick.

"What can we do?" asked Mr. Snarley. "He is a savage sort of scientific monster; but I have an idea some fun can be got out of him."

"Leave it to me," answered Dick; "I'll show you a spree."

Mr. Snarley grinned a ghastly grin, for he knew of old Dick's powers of getting fun out of people when he had made his mind up.

"Ted," said Dick.

"Yes, sir," was the reply.

"I shall wan't an old newspaper, some string, a little oil, a paiful of water, two plates, and some lampblack."

"What for, sir?"

"What's that to do with you?"

"No, sir; I only asked," replied Ted, apologetically.

"Then mind your own business in future. I am going to set booby traps," said Dick.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

BOOBY TRAPS.

"Did you say booby traps, Lightheart?" remarked Mr. Snarley, when Ted had gone to execute his errand.

"Yes," replied Dick.

"I define the word 'booby' thus: He is——"

"A clown," answered Dick; "So you're shut up."

"No; excuse me. He is more of a pantaloon. The clown plays the tricks; the pantaloon is the unhappy victim."

"That's what Crab will be; only don't talk so loud, or you'll wake him," said Dick.

When Ted returned, he half opened the door of the cabin and steadied the pail of water on its top so that any one rushing from the cabin in a hurry would be sure to bring it down upon his head.

He rubbed the lampblack carefully on the back of one plate and handed it to Polly.

"That's for you," he said.

Then he went to the professor, and having rubbed the paper over with oil, tied it carefully round his boots.

Striking a match, he lighted the paper, and returning to the table, exclaimed:

"Now, gentlemen, get on with the game!"

"I can't," answered Snarley; "I'm dying to see what will happen."

"Make believe, then. If he sees us all watching him when he wakes up, there will be a row, and you'll be in it."

The cards were dealt, but nobody paid the slightest attention to them.

Seeing this, Ted quietly appropriated the stakes.

"What are you doing?" asked Messiter.

"It's only a shilling a head," answered Ted, "but it's worth having. Don't holloa, Master Harry. I'll put you on a bit."

Messiter laughed, and said no more.

As the oiled paper began to burn, he moved first one foot uneasily and then the other.

The boots grew uncomfortably warm.

After writhing in a most laughable manner for some minutes, he jumped up.

"God bless me!" he exclaimed; "what is this?"

"Fire! fire!" cried Dick.

The startled professor ran helter-skelter to the door, which he pushed open.

This caused the suspended pail of water to fall on his head.

He was drenched through and through, and the water put out the fire.

Still the heat in the boots continued, though the oiled paper had ceased to burn.

Falling on the floor, he began to tear at his boots—which laced up.

It was no easy task to get them undone.

"Oh, good Lord!" he exclaimed; "I am burning. My boots are like an oven, and my feet will be baked like bread."

Roars of laughter resounded on all sides.

At length he got his boots off, and sat rubbing his feet, which were aching dreadfully.

"Who did this?" he asked, angrily.

"I beg your pardon, Mr. Crab," said Dick.

"Some one has been playing a trick, I think. Perhaps it is that showman fellow."

"We have been playing cards. You must be mistaken."

"I really beg, Mr. Crab, you will not use such language to an old friend like Mr. Snarley, of long standing."

"I shall say what I think, Lightheart."

"That's a great mistake, sir. Now say what you think. That's the way people get their heads punched," said Dick, solemnly.

"Look at me. I am aching with pain and wet through. Who did it, I ask? I will know," vociferated the professor.

"Consult the medium," replied Dick.

"What?"

"Be mesmerized by Mrs. Snarlini, and you will soon find out."

"How?" asked the professor. Dick then put a few words to Polly, who advanced to Professor Crab, and said, "I will gladly mesmerize you, and then you will

know all. Take this plate, hold the front toward you, and do as I do."

Mr. Crab jumped to his feet, and fell a prey to Polly's beauty and apparent simplicity.

He took the plate in his hand, and watched her carefully.

"Do as I do," she said.

"Begin," he replied.

Polly had a plate which was perfectly clean, and she drew her finger across the back and then down one cheek.

The professor followed her example.

But his plate was covered with lamp-black, and he made a dark streak along one side of his face. Polly continued to draw all over her countenance, forehead, nose, mouth, chin, and even her ears were touched.

The professor was soon painted like an Indian on the war-path.

"The charm is finished," said Polly at last.

"But," said the professor, "I am no wiser than I was before."

"Go," replied Dick, "to the glass, and you will see the face of your tormentor."

There was a handsome mirror in the saloon, and the professor went to it like a lamb.

He started back in horror.

"More tricks!" he exclaimed, fiercely. "When will this end?"

"Not till we get to Zanzibar," answered Mr. Snarley mildly, "unless you get rid of your high-flown ideas that a man who is a strolling player is not so good as you are. I have had to teach you a lesson, Mr. Crab, and I hope you won't forget it."

* * * * *

In the first week of May the *Fanny Lorton* rounded the Cape of Good Hope, and some days later passed through the Mozambique Channel on her way to Zanzibar.

Professor Crab and Mr. Snarley had continued at war with each other during the passage. The boys enjoyed themselves as boys will under any circumstances.

Captain Vipond seemed to labor under a depression which he could not shake off. He thought continually of Adele's untimely death, and dreaded above all things meeting with his deadly enemy, Harold Dugard. His great wish was to fly into the interior of Africa, where the foot of man had never yet trod. Here he fancied he would be safe. But he had miscalculated the strength of his enemy's hatred, his powerful will and his resources. They were destined to meet again—how soon will be seen as we progress.

Dick and his companions, including Mr. Snarley and his troupe, found lodgings at a house known as "Charley's," a place where foreigners who had no friends generally resided.

"What will you have, sir?" asked Charley, the proprietor, of Dick. "I guess the Yankees like a gin sling, or an eye opener, or a corpse reviver, and I calculate the Britishers will do well to follow their lead."

"Then you guess wrong," answered Dick.

"Please yourselves, gents; it's no business of mine; you've got to pay, and I've got to serve," said Charley, who was an American born and bred.

"Give me some seltzer and brandy," said Dick.

Behind him, as it appeared, was a face he could not mistake.

"Did you, by Jove!" said Messiter, becoming serious.

"What do you think Mr. Dugard's game is now?"

"He means to kill Vipond. There is no doubt about that. Perhaps he visited the wreck of the *Belle of New Orleans*, and found only the body of the dead Adele; anyhow, he has discovered that Vipond is in Zanzibar."

"And us also."

"Clearly. We have a great cause to fear him," continued Dick, "because we know his secret, and he may try to kill us all together. He knows Professor Crab is writing a book about him, and he would not like to have it published."

CHAPTER XXXV.

POLLY DISAPPEARS.

"His highness," said the Vizier to Snarley, "has cast the eye of favor upon your damsel whom you call Pollina."

"The d——! I mean, has he really?" said Snarley, with a start.

"Yes. She's highly honored, and destined to a higher estate. It is for you to name her price."

"To do what?" cried Snarley, excitedly.

"Snarlini Basha," said the Vizier, "we shall not quarrel about the amount, for when his highness covets a female slave to adorn his harem, he don't care what he pays for her."

"She is my wife," replied Snarley.

"That won't matter. Allah be good to her. Cannot I tell a lie for your sake? Is there no friendship in this world? The Sultan shall not know."

"Look here, my friend," said Snarley, "Englishmen don't sell their wives, and your master cannot have Polly."

"Not have her?"

"No; he ought to be ashamed of himself to think of such a thing. If I hear any more of it, I'll give the old gent a bit of my mind."

The Vizier looked confounded.

"By Allah!" he exclaimed, "the rage of the Sultan will fall heavily upon the head of his slave; he will be like a raging lion."

"I can't help that; take your hook," replied Snarley, who was furious.

Sadly and slowly the Vizier wended his way to the door, and walked back to the palace, followed by his trembling slaves, who saw the frown upon his brow.

No sooner had they arrived at the palace than the Vizier ordered them to receive fifty blows each with a stick, and looked on with a grim smile at their howls and contortions under the punishment.

Mr. Snarley rejoined his party, and every one saw at a glance that something had occurred to distract his usual serenity.

In the afternoon Polly grew feverish and restless, and when the cool of the evening came expressed her intention of going for a stroll.

Ted had his broad-brimmed straw hat on in a moment, and placed himself by her side.

"I'm only an odd boy, miss," he remarked, "but you may find me useful at a pinch."

"Thank you, Ted," she answered. "You shall come if you like."

They started together for the walk to the Cocoa Tree, while Dick and Messiter lounged about among the shipping in the harbor.

Captain Vipond had been very busy all day arranging matters for his caravan.

He had bought donkeys and engaged carriers and guards for the expedition. He had not spared money, so had made good progress, and announced to Dick that all would be ready to start in a couple of days.

"How do we go?" asked Dick.

"From Zanzibar we cross over to Bagamoyo, on the coast of Africa, and then plunge into the interior."

"To what part?"

"Toward Ujiji, on Lake Tanjanyika, where Livingstone was last heard of. I care not, so long as I get into the wilds of Africa," said Vipond.

"I shall be ready," said Dick. "The fact is, I long to penetrate this mysterious land, so nearly a blank upon the map."

It was growing dark while they were talking about their future prospects. Suddenly Snarley entered.

"Where is Polly?" was his first question.

"Gone out for a walk with Ted to Nazi-Moya, or the One Cocoa-tree, as they call it. She felt dull."

"It is time for her to be back. I don't like her to be out after dark," said Snarley, shaking his head.

"How did you get on with the consul?"

"With him? I did all I expected to do," replied Snarley; "he promised me all the assistance in his power if anything happened to Polly, but advised me to take the first ship on to India, or back to England, as those Arabs are as artful as they are daring."

"What are you afraid of?" asked Captain Vipond.

"Simply that my little wife Polly will be carried off to adorn the Sultan's harem, and that would be a pretty kettle of fish, wouldn't it?" replied Snarley.

He paced the room uneasily, peering now and again out of the window into the hazy foreground of lengthening shadows, spectral and misty. His mind was ill at ease.

Two hours passed thus, and he could bear the suspense no longer.

"Lightheart," he said.

"Sir to you," replied Dick.

"Something must have happened."

"I hope not, most sincerely."

"So do I. But I can't stop idle here. Will you come with me to Nazi-Moya? Polly has evidently disappeared."

"But where is Ted?" asked Dick puzzled.

"Dead, perhaps. Who can tell?" answered Snarley.

His agitation showed that he fond

Snarley was too much upset to speak, and he continued to hiver like an aspen.

"You see, sir," began Ted, as he staggered along the dry, sandy road, "me and Miss Polly stopped a bit behind the rest, because she said it was so calm and peaceful-like, and all at once it came on dark."

"We'd better be getting on toward home, Miss," I says.

"Yes, Ted, I think so, too," she replies; "Mr. Snarley will be anxious about me. But I have enjoyed my walk more than any one would think."

"That's lucky," says I.

"Ted," says she, all of a sudden, "did you hear anything?"

"No, miss."

"There's a sound of footsteps," says she.

"And so there was: for just then about a dozen Arabs came up to us, and one, who seemed to be the head of them, dollars hold of Miss Polly."

"Now, I know I'm only an odd boy, sir, but I has my feelings, and couldn't stand by and see it done."

"So I lets him have it hot and strong, just between the eyes, and he rolls over just for all the world as if he'd been shot."

"You should have heard the beggars growl. They did holler and cuss a good un."

"Come on," says I; "one down, and I'm game for the next. Old England forever!"

"What did they do?" asked Dick.

"They don't fight fair, sir. A second Arab catches hold of Miss Polly, who was a-screaming awful, and claps his ugly black hand over her pretty little pink and white face, and jaws away a lot of jabber that I couldn't make head or tail of."

"It wasn't good enough for me, so I hits out, and he goes down and gets a mouthful of sand, like the first chap."

"Number two," says I; "come on, gentlemen; you're kind, and I'm grateful."

"But the beggars were like a rusty old gun—they hung fire."

"Cut," says I to Miss Polly; "get out of it as quick as lightning when it's been well greased."

"She started for to fly, when another cove put out his ugly leg, and tripped her up. I went for that heathen Chinee, sir, but a swell with a turban, with ends streaming down his back like a woman's false hair, ups with something and catches me a prop on the nut that knocks me silly."

"I fell down flat, and never saw or heard no more till I seemed to wake up, and found myself with you."

"She's gone!" cried Snarley, with a deeper and more prolonged groan.

"We'll soon have her back," said Dick; "don't be a coward, man alive. We can guess where she is."

"In the Sultan's palace," returned Snarley; "that's just where the mischief is. I'm poor, and I can't fight a man like the Sultan."

"I'll do it for you."

"You! what are you against so many?" said Snarley, almost contemptuously; "if I trust to you, I shall never see my darling again."

"I tell you you shall."

Snarley broke down.

Covering his face with one hand, the tears glided down his cheeks, and his sobs were audible.

"Come, I say!" exclaimed Dick, "remember you're a man, and men don't cry."

"I can't help it."

"You must; I'd be ashamed to give way like that. I would indeed. You're not the Snarley you used to be."

"I don't care for myself. It's for her, Lightheart. You don't know what a good wife she's been to me."

"Of course she has. If I hadn't been engaged to Henrietta, you should never have had her," said Dick.

"It has been her love which has reconciled me to my new profession, at which your friend Professor Crab sneers. I'm heart-broken to think she is taken from me."

"We'll have her back. Come on, old fellow, you mustn't be selfish in your grief. Think of Ted. He did all he could for Polly."

"And I thank him for it," replied Snarley.

"You ought to do more than that," said Dick; "his head is badly broken, he wants a doctor, and you keep jawing away here, instead of taking him home."

"I'm very sorry. I didn't think of him," answered Snarley.

"Don't mind me," said Ted; "I am only an odd boy, and ain't got no pertickler feeling except about the heart. That's all right, but my head's a bit wooden, or else that blow I got must have let the daylight in considerable."

With some difficulty they got Ted back to Charley's, where he was seen by a surgeon, who said that, thanks to a rather thick skull, no great harm had been done.

He prescribed some medicine, bound up the wound, and ordered him to keep in bed for a couple of days.

"I ain't going to die, Mister Doctor," said Ted.

"Not this time, my lad," was the reply.

"What saved me?"

"Well, your head's something like a cocoa-nut."

"That's what they said when I went to school. My chump will stand punching," said Ted, philosophically.

There was great excitement at Charley's about the disappearance of Polly, who had made herself a general favorite.

Mr. Snarley went to the British consul again.

He was promised all the assistance that the consul could give him.

This, however, was slight consolation.

He could not say who had carried her off, and it was impossible for him to go to the Sultan's palace and swear that she was there.

His decided opinion was that she was in the power of the Sultan.

This was not evidence, though, being mere conjecture.

Snarley returned to Charley's, cast down and dejected.

Dick was waiting up for him, and Professor Crab condescended to sympathize with him, though he did it in a disagreeable manner.

"My good sir," he said, "I am sorry for your loss, deeply sorry; for your wife seemed to me to be a most deserving person."

"Cut it short," said Snarley.

"I haven't much to say," said the professor, drawing himself up with dignity. "A woman is a high type of mammalia, and as such I respect her. She is classified, and I regard her as I would a highly developed species of any kind."

"Lightheart," said Mr. Snarley, "take this man away, will you. I'm not up to kicking him to-night."

"Sir," said the professor, "hear me out. Kick me if you like and can, but hear me. People who follow your degraded profession must expect to be regarded with suspicion, and actresses are not remarkable for their virtue."

"By George," said Snarley, clenching his fists, "I can't stand much more of this!"

"Still you have given her your name, such as it is, and she is, I presume, legally married to you," the professor went on.

"I'll show you the certificate."

The professor waved his hand.

The point is of no great importance; married or not

married, she was a source of gain to you, because she was clever."

Snarley turned to Dick.

"Isn't he an insulting beast?"

"Yes, don't take any notice of him," said Dick.

"I will make a note of the fact that you appear to have loved her in my essay upon 'morals and manners in various professions, callings and countries,'" continued the professor.

"Put that down also," said Snarley.

He sprang up and hit Mr. Crab a violent blow in the face.

The professor rolled against the wall, and his spectacles were shattered to atoms.

"Dear me, this is an assault," he remarked.

"Yes, and you'll have another directly, if you don't shut up," said Snarley.

"Is this right, Lightheart?" asked the professor. "Will you stand by and see me smitten in the eye?"

"It served you right, sir," said Dick.

"May I venture to inquire why?"

"You chaffed Mr. Snarley, when you knew he was already excited."

"Is that any reason why I should have my nose bruised and my spectacles ruined; they were pebbles, and I doubt if I can match them in Zanzibar."

"Stop it, or I'll do it again, said Snarley; "I can't stand it."

"Quite right, too," said old Hopkins, who had been remarkably quiet hitherto.

"What have you to do with it, my friend?" asked Mr. Crab.

"Polly is my daughter, and you've been a bullyragging of her. She's as honest as ever your mother was, though she do play on the stage for her living."

"My friend, pray calm yourself," said the professor.

"I is calm, but Snarley shan't be put upon and nagged at by the likes of you."

"Do you know who I am?"

"A jolly, insulting old fool, that's what I call you."

"Lightheart," said the professor, "I shall wish you good night and return to my studies. I cannot put up with the ungrammatical passions of these people."

"Good-night, sir," rejoined Dick.

The professor had almost gained the door when an idea struck Hopkins.

"Blessed if I can't help him on his way," he cried.

Rushing after him, he raised his foot, and the unlucky professor, springing high in the air, missed the first step and rolled down to the bottom of the staircase.

Old Hopkins returned, rubbing his hands.

"That's done me as much good as an encore," he said.

The nasty, crabbed old wretch. He never opens his mouth unless it is to talk skintastic or say something nasty."

"Never mind him," said Snarley. "What's to be done about Polly?"

"God knows, poor girl. I'd give my right hand to have her back again. Shall we return to the palace?" said Hopkins.

"That's all rot," said Dick.

"Ah! my boy, you don't know the feelings of a father."

"Nor those of a husband," said Snarley.

"I had an idea of getting into the palace to hear your next performance," said Dick.

They both looked up hopefully at him.

It was strange to see two men so much older than he was pinning their faith to a mere boy.

"What's the dodge?" asked Hopkins.

"The wheeze is this," answered Dick. "You dress me up in Polly's clothes. Twig?"

"Not yet."

"You go and sell me to Selim-el-Mandeb, the Vizier, as a slave for the Sultan."

"Well?"

"That will get me into the palace, won't it? I've got good features, and no hair on my face yet. My hair has grown pretty long—I can stick on a chignon, and there we are."

"But," said Hopkins, "they'd murder you when they found you out."

"First of all they'd have to spell 'able.' I'm not so easily disposed of as you think, and I'll back myself to get Polly out of this scrape."

Hopkins reflected a moment.

"Upon my word," he exclaimed at length, "there is a good deal of sense in what Master Lightheart says."

"Of course there is, old son," answered Dick. "I know what I'm about. The consul can't do anything. He will only promise to help you."

"Save her, Lightheart, and you will save my life," exclaimed Snarley.

"All right. Leave it to me. Have a drink, and go quietly to bed. To-morrow we'll dress up, and I'll chance the rest."

"You are risking your life, though," remarked Snarley.

"That's of no consequence. A man can but die once, and I think I proved I was not afraid of death when I was in the boat, just before you picked me up, and we drew lots who should die."

"I admire your spirit," exclaimed Mr. Snarley.

"And I like your pluck, my boy," said old Hopkins;

"but you were always a one."

"A British boy," replied Dick, "should always be like Nelson, and not know fear. I don't say I shall succeed in saving Polly, but I say I will try."

"I shall not forget your kindness," said Snarley.

"We haven't much in the treasury, Master Dick; only a matter of a hundred quid, or so; but it is all at your service," added Hopkins.

"My dear fellow," answered Dick, "what I do is without hope or expectation of reward. Polly and I are old friends; you are an old pal; Mr. Snarley was my tutor at school; and if my daring and dodginess will put you all right, you're welcome."

"You are a brave boy," said Snarley. "You don't want flattery or thanks, do you?"

"Not I."

"My heart's too full for talking. I accept your offer with pleasure, and God speed you."

"Amen!" exclaimed old Hopkins, solemnly.

"If I get killed and find a nameless grave, you'll tell the people at home all about it, won't you?" asked Dick.

"We'll do more than that—we'll avenge you," said Snarley, theatrically.

"That's settled. Let's have another bottle of fiz, and go to bye-bye."

"I could drink a gallon to-night, and it wouldn't hurt me," said Snarley.

They passed an hour very pleasantly, and went to bed, Dick dreaming that he was the favorite sultana of the harem, and that all the other ladies were trying to poison him.

Such is the strength of the imagination when the body is at rest and the mind perturbed.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

THE WHITE SLAVE.

It would have been impossible for any one of mature years to successfully undertake the task Dick had set himself.

The palace of an Eastern sultan is jealously guarded.

Potentates in the East are permitted by their religion to have as many wives as they can buy.

Solomon, in the Bible is said to have had six hundred concubines.

"He don't understand English, my child," replied the Vizier; "I have to interpret for him; and you must know that in time the Sultan will tire of your charms, and then I can get you put in a sack and thrown into the sea."

"That would be getting the sack, and no mistake," said Dick, laughing.

"More than you think depends upon me. It is not wise to throw dirt on my beard. Come, sweet Aida, smile upon me and no longer refuse me a pretty kiss."

"You mustn't do it," answered Dick, remembering that he was playing the part of a girl.

"Why not, sweet Aida? No one will know."

"Mother says I mustn't," replied Dick.

"You are far away from home, and it is the destiny of girls to be kissed," urged the Vizier.

"Well, kiss my hand; won't that do?" said Dick.

He extended his hand, and the Vizier raised it passionately to his lips.

"Come along, do," said Dick; "I want to see the Sultan."

He ran on first, and the Vizier, amorous though he was, desisted from his efforts to obtain a kiss and followed him.

"After going some distance Dick stopped, and Selim overtook him out of breath.

"Go it, old fellow, I'll lead you a dance," said Dick to himself.

"How you run," said the Vizier; "fleet as a deer are you."

A slave met them at this juncture, and, addressing the Vizier, said in Arabic:

"The fair Ferringhee is awake. Her maidens attend her, but she will not eat or drink. Her tears fall like the rain in spring. Who shall comfort her?"

This slave was the Kislar Agha, or chief of the eunuchs, who had the entire charge of the harem.

"Seyd himself shall comfort her," said Selim, in English, calling the Sultan by his name. "Yes, Seyd himself shall see this Western pearl and kiss away the tears. Ah! son of Eblis that I am," he added, "I am talking in the foreign tongue, which the Kislar Agha cannot understand."

He repeated his reply in Arabic.

Dick concluded that the lady they were talking about must be Polly. He said nothing, however, it being his plan to seem as simple and innocent as possible.

"Hassein," cried the Vizier, addressing the Kislar Agha, "take this white slave to the harem, and have her scented and painted for His Highness' inspection."

"Is she a new purchase?"

"Yes; our master wishes something always new; take him with you; I will hasten to Seyd," said the Vizier, shrugging his shoulders.

The Kislar Agha pushed Dick rudely along the passage, and made signs that he was to walk before him. A short walk brought them to the harem, which was a distinct building from the rest of the palace. Here resided all the ladies of the Sultan's household, and their attendants.

Crossing a yard, Dick was ushered into the seraglio or harem, and handed over to an old woman, who could not speak a word of English. She conducted him to a large room, elegantly furnished, where upward of fifty women of all ages were lounging about. They stared insolently at him as he entered. Some ran up to him and talked in Arabic. He shook his head as a sign that he did not understand them. The old woman called in a loud voice for Anna.

A woman with a very ladylike appearance, but old, haggard, and worn, came up. A few words passed between them, and the one named Anna said, in excellent English, to Dick:

"I hear you are a countrywoman of mine."

"Are you English?" asked Dick.

"Unfortunately I am."

"How long have you been here?"

"Seventeen years, now. This place is a grave. When I first came I was young and handsome, like yourself. My father was a ship-owner. He took me for a voyage, we came here, and I was stolen."

"Is there no escape?"

"None."

"Sorry for you," said Dick. "I should bolt."

"You can't. The Kislar Agha would kill you if he caught you."

"I'd try it on."

"Ah, you do not know. You are young and inexperienced. Where do you come from, and what brought you here?"

"That's a secret, my little dear," replied Dick. "When we know one another better, I may tell you."

"I am willing to be your friend," she answered, "because I feel for a countrywoman. One's beauty soon fades here, and then you are thought nothing of."

"Perhaps I may want a friend, Anna," replied Dick, seriously.

"I feel sure of it."

"Here can I find you, if I want you?"

"Here. I am always in this room or at the bath. Would you like to come and bathe with me now? There are always several ladies in the bath."

"Not at present," answered Dick, smiling. "I'll just walk about; you sit here, Anna, and go on with your cigarette. I'll come back directly."

"Where are you going?" she asked.

"Only to have a look round."

"Do not be too proud and confident," said Anna. "I hear that a new and lovely bird has just been caged; an English girl who came over with some actors. She is in the palace, and has been stolen or decoyed from her friends."

A pretty Georgian slave was reclining on a divan, and he sat down close by her side.

He gave her a pinch to attract her attention, and said:

"Ain't you a little duck, eh?"

The lovely Georgian did not understand him.

"Give us a kiss for luck," continued Dick.

He bent over her and kissed her, squeezing her hand at the same time; and the Georgian, thinking that the new slave was lonely and miserable, and wishing to make a friend of some one had saluted her, returned the caress.

"This is nice," thought Dick; "I like this."

An hour glided by, and Dick was roused from his happiness by a loud shriek.

Two of the inmates of the harem had quarreled, and were fighting, scratching, and even biting.

"That's a staggerer," said Dick, as one of the fair combatants knocked the other into a small fountain which was in a marble basin.

"Here comes Agha," exclaimed Anna, "and I'm not sorry."

The Kislar Agha had heard the noise, and he stalked into the room, holding in his hand a sort of dog whip with a lash.

A score of women instantly surrounded him, all talking at once, and giving a different version to the quarrel. He pushed them all on one side, and proceeded toward the originators of the discord.

The sharp crack of a whip was heard, followed by cries of pain.

"He's at it," exclaimed Dick, trembling with excitement. Anna laid her hand upon his arm.

"Are you mad?" she asked.

"I can't stand it," replied Dick.

"You will be bastinadoed if you touch the Kislar Agha."

"What's that?"

"Beaten with a stick on the soles of your feet."

"We'll see about that," answered Dick, struggling to get away from the embrace in which she held him.

The next moment he was free.

Pushing his way through the crowd of ladies, he got to the front, and saw the chief of the eunuchs chastising one of the women who had been fighting.

She cowered at his feet, and only uttered short, sharp, whining cries, as each stroke of the whip fell upon her defenseless shoulders.

"You cowardly brute!" cried Dick.

At the same time he struck him a violent blow under the ear. The Kislar Agha fell like a log. The noisy crowd was hushed in an instant.

The Kislar Agha, stunned, lay still and motionless, as if he were dead. Even Dick was astonished at the success of his blow, and to fear what revenge might be meted out to him.

Suddenly the buzz of conversation began again. The Kislar Agha was recovering himself. He staggered to his feet, and glared savagely around him.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

THE BASTINADO.

SEVERAL ladies of the harem who wished to curry favor with the Agha pointed out Dick as the one who struck him. The Agha spoke a few words in Arabic to some slaves, and Dick was seized by the arm. They half led, half dragged him into the passage, and conducted him into a small room at the end. He was suddenly thrown on his back, and his feet were held up in the air, while his slippers were taken from his feet. The Agha provided himself with a long cane. Raising it in the air, he brought it down with all his strength upon the soles of his unprotected feet.

A stinging sensation, which numbed his legs up to the knees, was felt by the sufferer. Blow followed blow, until Dick could bear it no longer. Exerting all his strength, he threw off the two negroes who were holding him.

"I've had enough of this," he said.

A chair stood near him. Seizing it in his powerful grasp, he tore off one of the legs, and, as one of the slaves approached him, he hit him on the forehead. The wretched eunuch fell down with his skull broken. Another blow prostrated the second slave, who was prostrated by the side of his companion.

"Now for you, my boy," exclaimed Dick, rushing upon the Kislar Agha.

The chief of the eunuchs extended his arm to save his head, but a blow from Dick's formidable weapon broke it.

Retiring with a howl to a corner, the Agha sank upon the floor.

Going to the door, Dick saw that the key was outside, and he contented himself with locking it. Perhaps he might have escaped from the harem, but this he did not want to do. His object was to rescue Polly.

While he was hesitating what to do, and which way to go, he saw his friend of the harem, Anna, who glided up to him with the utmost care.

"How did you escape?" she asked. "I heard your cries while you were being bastinadoed."

"That I'll let a sovereign you didn't," replied Dick.

"But—"

"I didn't halloo at all. I've too much pluck for that. You might have heard me Agha when I broke his arm, or the slaves when I cracked their skulls with this leg of a chair."

He pointed to his weapon, which he still carried in his hand.

"Oh, I see now," she cried. "How strong you are for a woman."

"I am not a woman," said Dick.

Anna uttered a little scream. "What?" she exclaimed.

"No; I am a young man," said Dick, "disguised as a woman."

"But it is death for a man to enter this place unless he is in the service of the Kislar Agha."

"I know that. I wished to save a friend of mine from the fate which you deplore so much. The lady of whom you spoke to me. She who was stolen for the Sultan's pleasure. The last bird who has been caged in this den of infamy."

"Ah! it is very grand of you to entertain such an idea; but I fear you will not be able to accomplish it, yet I honor and admire you for your courage," said Anna.

"But tell me, what can I do? Where can I go?" said Dick.

"You see that staircase? It leads to the root, which is flat. Go up there. I will spread a report that you have escaped through the garden, a door of which you found open. Wait till nightfall, and I will seek you, and conduct you out of the palace."

"I cannot, will not go without Polly," said Dick, in determination.

"Are you so resolved to save the last victim of the amorous Sultan?" asked Anna.

"Or die in the attempt."

"How you must love her!"

"As a sister I do, but in no other way. She is the wife of a friend of mine. As for me, I have a sweetheart in England."

A loud noise was heard at the extremity of the corridor. The Kislar Agha was kicking against the door and calling loudly for help.

Dick pressed Anna's hand in token of gratitude, then he rushed up the staircase; his progress was stopped by a trap-door, which he pushed open, stepping upon a flat roof.

Creeping up to the edge, Dick looked over. The garden swarmed with black slaves, who were hunting the trees and bushes thoroughly.

It was evidently thought that Dick was concealed somewhere about there.

"Whata lark," said Dick to himself.

The Kislar Agha was swearing in choice Arabic at the slaves, and as he stood nearly under Dick, the latter could not resist the temptation of having a shot at him.

Creeping back, he dislodged a half brick. This he took to the parapet and let it fall on the Agha. There was a cry, a fall and an immense hubbub. The unfortunate Agha received the brick on the head, and as it fell from a considerable distance it hurt him.

His turban, which consisted of many folds, protected him from the full force of the blow.

Nevertheless, he fell on his hands and knees, bellowing like a bull.

The slaves looked up and saw Dick. They raised a shout and pointed to the roof.

Instantly half-a-dozen launched themselves towards the nearest door, evidently with the intention of coming up to the roof.

The thoughts of more bastinado nearly maddened Dick. Suddenly the chimneys struck him as a means of safety.

Precipitating himself toward the nearest, from which no smoke issued, he let himself down, clinging to the irregularly placed bricks of which it was composed. The soot nearly stifled him. He coughed and spluttered, but continued to descend.

Fierce cries and exclamations reached his ears in a confused murmur.

Lowering his body, he emerged from the chimney, and proceeded to rub the soot out of his eyes. It was impossible for him to say where he was. The room was scantily furnished, and appeared to be called an ante room, leading into some grander apartment.

Dick looked down at his skirts as soon as he had got the soot out of his eyes.

"I ought to arrange my dress," he remarked, with a smile as he smoothed down the blackened garment.

A door stood half open on his right. He heard a voice which spoke in Arabic, issue from it.

"I'll go and listen," he said to himself. "Perhaps I shall hit upon Polly, after all."

His conjecture was nearer the mark than he believed at the moment. The unfortunate girl was in need of help.

Stealing along on tiptoe, Dick approached the half-open door.

CHAPTER XL.

THE ESCAPE.

PEEPING carefully in through the door, he beheld an elegantly furnished apartment, voluptuous and entrancing.

In it were three people. The first he easily recognized as Selim el-Mandeb, the Grand Vizier. The second, from the gorgeousness of his attire and the quantity of jewels which sparkled all over his dress, he imagined to be the Sultan, while a glance sufficed to show him that the third was Polly.

Her hair hung in disheveled masses all over her shoulders. Her eyes were red with weeping, and she sat with her hands clasped, as it in an agony of doubt and despair.

Selim acted as interpreter for the Sultan, who spoke to him at intervals.

"Why not be resigned to your fate?" Dick heard Selim el-Mandeb say.